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BY

CUNNINGHAM GEIKIE, D.D.,

Vicar of St. Martin's at Palace, Norwich.

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THE

HOLY LAND AND THE BIBLE.

CHAPTER XXV.

GETHSEMANE AND CALVARY.

From the Virgin's Fountain towards the north the valley contracts still more, and the sides become steeper. On the right hand especially, as you advance, the hill is very wild; sheets of rock, rough outcrops of the horizontal strata, and bare walls of limestone, making the path as wild as that of a Highland glen. Indeed, steps have been cut in more than one place, to help man and beast in their laborious progress. In this, the narrowest part of the Valley of Jehoshaphat, the Jews of to-day have the cemetery dearest of all to their race, for here the dead lie, under the shadow of the Temple Hill, in the sacred ground on which the great Judgment will, in their opinion, be held. Numberless flat stones mark the graves on both sides of the waterless bed of the Kedron, especially on the eastern. Above them, a little to the north, the eye catches a succession of funeral monuments which offer, in their imposing size and style, a strong contrast to the humble stones that pave the side of the hill close at hand. They are four in number, and have all been cut out of the rock, which remains in its roughness on each side of them. The first is that of Zechariah, a miniature temple about

eighteen feet square, with two Ionic pillars and two half-pillars on each side, and a square pillar at each corner. Over these are a moulded architrave and a cornice, the pattern of which is purely Assyrian. From these there rises a pyramidal top—the whole monument being hewn, in one great mass, out of the rocky ledge, without any apparent entrance, though one may possibly be hidden under the rubbish accumulated during the course of ages in the broad passage which runs round the tomb. The whole structure is about thirty feet high. From the Assyrian cornice it might be thought to be as old as the early Jewish kings, but traces of Roman influence in the volutes and in the moulding beneath make it probable that it is not older than the second century before Christ, who doubtless often passed by it.

The tradition of the Jews, current in our Lord's day, associated with this monument the Prophet Zechariah, who was stoned, by command of King Joash, "in the court of the house of the Lord;"[1] and it may well be that Christ was looking down upon it from the Temple courts close above, on the opposite side of the valley, when He addressed the Pharisees, with whom He had been disputing, in the bitter words: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets."[2] I noticed square holes in the rock on the south side, probably the sockets in which the masons rested the beams of the scaffold while they were cutting out the tomb.

The so-called Tomb of Absalom is the most stately of the four monuments. It is forty-seven feet high, and nearly twenty feet square; hewn, like that of Zechariah,

[1] 2 Chron. xxiv. 20—22. [2] Matt. xxiii. 29–31.

out of the rock, and separated from it, at the sides, by a passage eight or nine feet broad, but not detached from the hill at the back. The natural rock has, in fact, simply been hewn away on three sides, to form the body of it; but the upper part, which is in the form of a low spire, with a top like an opening flower, is built of large stones. The solid body is about twenty feet high, so that the upper part rises twenty-seven feet over it, but the height of the whole must have been originally greater, as there is much rubbish lying round the base, and covering the entrance. The sides are ornamented with Ionic pillars, over which is a Doric frieze and architrave. Wild plants grow out of the chinks between the stones of the spire, and on the base from which it springs, and a chaos of stones lies on the ground below. A hole in the north side, large enough to creep through, is the only way to get inside, but there is now nothing to be seen, except an empty space about eight feet square, with tenantless shelf-graves on two sides, cut in the rock. In the Second Book of Samuel we read that "Absalom, in his lifetime, had taken and reared up for himself a pillar which is in the king's dale, for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance; and he called the pillar after his own name; and it is called, to this day, Absalom's place."[1] The Grecian ornaments on the present monument show, however, that it could not, in its present form, have come down from a period so early; but the solid base may have been more complete long ago, and the adornments may have been added to it later. A recent traveller standing on the Temple wall above, on the other side of the ravine, saw two children throw stones at it, and heard them utter curses as they did so; and it is to this custom, followed for ages, that much of the rubbish at the base is

[1] 2 Sam. xviii. 18. For "place," read "monument."

due. The Rabbis from early ages have enjoined that "if any one in Jerusalem has a disobedient child, he shall take him out to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, to Absalom's Monument, and force him, by words or stripes, to hurl stones at it, and to curse Absalom; meanwhile telling him the life and fate of that rebellious son." To heap stones over the graves of the unworthy, or on a spot infamous for some wicked deed, has been a Jewish custom in all ages. On the way to Gaza I passed a cairn thus raised on the spot where a murder had been committed some time before, and I saw one at Damascus of enormous size, every passer-by, for generations, having added a stone. So, the Hebrews "raised a great heap of stones unto this day," over Achan, near Ai,[1] and this was done also over the body of the King of Ai, "at the entering of the gate," when Joshua took the city.[2] Thus, also, when Absalom had been killed in the wood by Joab, they took his corpse and "cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him."[3]

The traditional Tomb of Jehoshaphat, close to that of Absalom, is a portal cut in the rock, leading down to a subterranean tomb, with a number of chambers; how old, no one can tell. Exactly opposite the south-east corner of the Temple enclosure is "the Grotto of St. James," with a Doric front, leading to an extensive series of sepulchral chambers, spreading far into the body of the hill. The name of the family—the Beni Hezir—is on the façade, in early Hebrew characters; but the structure is connected with St. James by a monkish tradition that he lay concealed in it during the interval between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, though this venerable association has not saved it in later times from being used as a fold for sheep and goats.

[1] Josh. vii. 26. [2] Josh. viii. 29. [3] 2 Sam. xviii. 17.

Near Absalom's Pillar, a small stone bridge, of one low arch, leads over the narrow ravine to the Temple Hill. A rough channel has been torn in the valley beneath it by the rain-floods of past times, but of a channel beyond there are no signs a short distance above or below it, the upper reaches of the valley being walled across, here and there, with loose stones to form grain-plots. The Kedron used in olden days to flow here, but there is no stream now, even after the heaviest rain, the loose rubbish which has poured from the ruin of the walls and buildings of the city above, during many sieges, having so filled the old bed that any water there may be now percolates through the soil and disappears. At least seventy-five feet of such wreckage lies over the bottom of the upper part of the valley and on the slopes of the Temple Hill leading down to it; but even this is far less than what has been tumbled into the Tyropœon, on the other side of the hill. There 100 feet of rubbish hides the stones of the old Temple walls, thrown into it after the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar's soldiery.

In the steep, rocky part of the Kedron valley, near the tombs of the Jewish cemetery, there are no olive-trees to be seen, but they begin to be numerous on the upper side of the little bridge, and there are some almond-trees on Mount Moriah. The walls of the Temple enclosure proudly crown the eastern side of the hill, their colossal size still exciting the same astonishment as it once roused in the disciples, when they called aloud, "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings!"[1] On the bridge, or near it, some lepers were standing or sitting on the ground, begging; hideous in their looks and their poverty. A water-seller or two, also, were standing at the wall, offering their doubtful

[1] Mark xiii. 1.

beverage to passers-by. The bridge is the one passage from the east side of Jerusalem to Mount Olivet and Siloam, so that there are always some people passing. Sheep graze on the wretched growth near the tombs; their guardians, picturesque in their poverty, resting in some shady spot near. Asses with burdens of all kinds jog along over the sheets of rock, their drivers walking quietly behind the last one. The creatures never think of running, and there is only one possible path, so that it is not necessary to lead them. A church, known as the Chapel of the Tomb of the Virgin, stands within white walls on the eastern side of the bridge, and a short way down from it is a garden, to name which is enough: Gethsemane—"the Oil Press;" the spot to which, or to some place near, our Lord betook Himself after the institution of the Last Supper on the night of His betrayal. Here, in the shadow of the Trees of Peace, amidst stillness, loneliness, and darkness, except for the light of the Passover moon, His soul was troubled even unto death. Here He endured His more than mortal agony, till calmness returned with the holy submission that once and again rose from His inmost heart—"Father, not My will, but Thine, be done!" No Christian can visit the spot without being deeply affected. Numerous olive-trees still grow on the slopes and in the hollow, and of these the Franciscans have enclosed seven within a high wall, in the belief that they are the very trees under which our Saviour prayed. But within a few decades after He had been crucified, the Roman general Titus ordered all the trees, in every part around Jerusalem, to be cut down; and when, in later times, others had taken their places, there is little doubt that they, too, perished, to supply the timber or fuel needed for some of the many sieges Jerusalem has borne since. It is, hence, impos-

sible to tell the exact site of the ancient Gethsemane, nor is it essential that we should. Superstition may crave to note the very scene of a sacred event, but the vagueness of doubt as to the precise spot only heightens the emotion of a healthy mind, by leaving the imagination free.

That the Betrayal, with all its antecedent agony, took place somewhere near the small Kedron bridge, there can however be no doubt, for the flight of steps which formerly led from St. Stephen's Gate to the valley was the natural exit from the city in Christ's day. These, however, are now buried beneath 100 feet of rubbish, and no one would venture, in the night, down the rocky descent which begins a short distance below the bridge. While, moreover, the present olive-trees cannot be those beneath which our Lord kneeled, the fact that such trees still grow on the spot shows that it was just the place for the garden of our Saviour's time to have been, though it may have lain above the bridge instead of below it. The spot now called Gethsemane seems to have been fixed upon during the visit of the Empress Helena to Jerusalem, in A.D. 326, when the places of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection were supposed to have been identified. But 300 years is a long interval; as long, indeed, as the period from Queen Elizabeth's day till now, and any identification made after such a time must be doubtful. Yet the site that can boast recognition of nearly 1,600 years has deep claims on our respect, though other similar enclosures exist near it, and other olive-trees equally ancient are seen in them. At one time the garden was larger than at present, and contained several churches and chapels. The scene of the arrest of Christ was pointed out, in the Middle Ages, in what is now called "the Chapel of the Sweat," and the traditions respecting other spots connected with the last hours of our Lord have also

varied, but only within narrow limits, for since the fourth century, at all events, the garden has always remained the same.

The wall of Gethsemane, facing Jerusalem, is continuous, the entrance to the garden being by a small door at the eastern, or Mount of Olives, side. Immediately outside this you are shown the spot where Peter, James, and John are said to have slept during the Agony; and the fragment of a pillar, a few paces to the south, but still outside the garden, is pointed to as the place where Judas betrayed his Master with a kiss. The garden itself is an irregular square, 160 feet long, and ten feet narrower, divided into flower-beds and protected by hedges; altogether, so artificial, trim, and modern that one is staggered by the difference between the reality and what might be expected. The seven olive-trees are evidently very old; their trunks, in some cases, burst from age, and shored up with stones; the branches growing like thin rods from the massive stems, one of which measures nineteen feet in circumference. Roses, pinks, and other flowers blossom in the borders of the enclosure, and here also are some young olive-trees and cypresses. Olive oil from the trees of the garden is sold at a high price, and rosaries made from stones of the olives are in great request. I wish, however, there were less of art and more of nature in such a spot, for it is easier to abandon one's self to the tender memories of Gethsemane under the olives on the slope outside the wall, than amidst the neat walks and edgings and flower-beds within it.

The Chapel of the Tomb of the Virgin, over the traditional spot where the Mother of our Lord was buried by the Apostles, is about fifty steps east of the little bridge, and is mostly underground. Three flights of steps lead down to the space in front of it, so that nothing is

seen above ground but the porch. But even after you have gone down the three flights of stairs, you are only at the entrance to the church, amidst marble pillars, flying buttresses, and Pointed arches. Forty-seven additional marble steps, descending in a broad flight nineteen feet wide, lead down a further depth of thirty-five feet, and here you are surrounded by monkish sites and sacred spots. The whole place is, in fact, two distinct natural caves, enlarged and turned to their present uses with infinite care; curious from the locality, and perhaps no less so as an illustration of the length to which superstition may go in destroying the true sacredness of a spiritual religion like Christianity. Far below the ground, you find a church thirty-one yards long, and nearly seven wide, lighted by many lamps, and are shown the tomb of the father and mother of the Virgin, and that of Joseph and the Virgin herself; and as if this were not enough, a long subterranean gallery leads, down six steps more, to a cave eighteen yards long, half as broad, and about twelve feet high, which you are told is "the Cavern of the Agony"! Of course, sacred places so august could not be left in the hands of any single communion, so that portions belong respectively to the Greeks, Armenians, Abyssinians, and Mahommedans. Yet the whole is very interesting, for the beautiful architecture of marble steps, pillars, arches, and vaulted roof, owes its present perfection to the beneficence of Queen Melesind or Millicent, in the twelfth century, and is perhaps the most perfectly preserved specimen of the work of the Crusading church-builders now extant in Palestine.

Gethsemane and the Chapel of the Tomb of the Virgin are at the foot of the Mount of Olives, which can easily be ascended from them, for its summit lies only about 350 feet higher, and is reached by a gentle incline,

up which one may walk pleasantly in about a quarter of an hour. A pilgrim was reverently kissing the rocks behind Gethsemane; flocks of black goats and white sheep nibbled the hill plants or scanty grass; the rubbish-slopes of Mount Moriah rose, sprinkled with bushes and a few fruit-trees, making them look greener than the comparatively barren and yellow surface of the Mount of Olives. Yet the olives scattered in clumps or singly over all the ascent, made it easy enough to realise how the hill got its name from being once covered with their white-green foliage, refreshing the eye, and softening the pale yellow of the soil. A woman and child, ascending the hill to the village at its top, or going round to Bethany, were leading along a single sheep—perhaps all their wealth, for there are still, as in the time of Nathan and David, rich men who own "exceeding many flocks and herds," and many a poor man who has only "one little ewe lamb," which grows up together with him and with his children, and eats of his own morsel, and drinks of his own cup, and lies at night in his bosom, and is unto him as a daughter.[1] In the mud hovels of the peasantry such creatures walk freely about the little mud-walled court, and in and out of the doorless hut, on the floor of which the family lie down at night to sleep.

The whole slope of Olivet is seamed with loose stone walls, dividing the property of different owners, and is partly ploughed and sown, but there is a path leading unobstructedly from behind Gethsemane to the top of the hill. Many of the enclosures are carefully banked into terraces from which the stones have been laboriously gathered into heaps, or used to heighten and strengthen the walls; and when I visited the place there were some orchards in which olive, pomegranate, fig, almond, and

[1] 2 Sam. xii. 2, 3.

other trees showed their fresh spring leaves, or swelling buds. Nor is any part of the slope without its flowers: anemones and other blossoms were springing even in the clefts of the rocks.

There may be said to be three summits: the centre one slightly higher than the others, like a low head between two shoulders. This middle height is covered on the top with buildings, among which is the Church of the Ascension, though it is certain that Christ did not ascend from the summit of Olivet, for it is expressly said that He led His disciples "out, as far as to Bethany," and, moreover, the top of the hill was covered with buildings in Christ's day. From a very early date, however, it has been supposed to be the scene of the great event, for Constantine built upon it a church without a roof, to mark the spot. Since then, one church has succeeded another, the one before the present dating from A.D. 1130, when it was built by the Crusaders; but this in turn having become ruinous, it was rebuilt in 1834, after the old plan. It stands in a large walled space entered by a fine gate, but is itself very small, measuring only twenty feet in diameter; a small dome over a space in the centre marking, it is asserted, the exact spot from which our Lord ascended. This specially holy spot belongs to the Mahommedans, who show a mark in the rock which, they tell you, is a footprint of Christ. Christians have to content themselves with having mass in the chapel on some of the great Church feasts. The church stands in the centre of the enclosure.

The minaret of a dervish monastery, just outside the wall, on the left, in front of a miserable village, affords the finest view to be had around Jerusalem. No one hindered my ascending it by the stairs inside, though some children and men watched me, that I might not

get away without an effort on their part to get bakshish. On the west lay Jerusalem, 200 feet below the ground I had left. The valley of the Kedron was at my feet, and above it the great Temple area, now sacred to the Aksa Mosque, and to that of Omar, which rose glittering in its splendour in the bright sunshine. Beyond, the city stretched out in three directions; slender minarets shooting up from amidst the hundreds of flat roofs which reached away at every possible level, and were varied by the low domes swelling up from each of them over the stone arch of the chamber beneath; the great dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the towers of the citadel standing proudly aloft over all. The high city walls, yellow and worn with age, showed many a green field inside the battlements.

Turning to the north, a rich olive-garden spread away from before the Damascus Gate, and the long slope of Nebi Samwil or Mizpeh closed the view, in the distance, like a queen among the hills around, with its commanding height of nearly 3,000 feet[1] above the sea-level. Close at hand was the upper part of the Kedron valley, beautiful with spring flowers; and overlooking Jerusalem rose Mount Scopus, once the head-quarters of Titus, when its sides were covered with the tents of his legionaries. On the south were the flat-topped cone of the Frank Mountain, where Herod the Great was buried; the wilderness hills of Judah; the heights of Tekoa and of Bethlehem, which itself is out of sight, though the neighbouring villages, clinging to richly-wooded slopes, are visible; the hills bounding the Plain of Rephaim or the Giants; and the Monastery of Mar Elias, looking across from its eminence towards Jerusalem. But the most striking view is towards the east. It is impossible to

[1] 2,935 feet.

realise, till one has seen it, how the landscape sinks, down, and ever down, from beyond the Mount of Olives to the valley of the Jordan. It is only about thirteen miles, in a straight line, to the Dead Sea, but in that distance the hills fall in gigantic steps till the blue waters are actually 3,900 feet below the spot on which I stood. It seemed incredible that they should be even so far off, for the pure transparent air confounds all idea of distance, and one could only correct the deception of the senses by remembering that these waters could be reached only after a seven hours' ride through many gloomy, deep-cut ravines, and fearfully desolate waterless heights and hills, over which even the foot of a Bedouin seldom passes. Nor are the 3,900 feet the limit of this unique depression of the earth's surface, for the Dead Sea is itself, in some places, 1,300 feet deep, so that the bottom of the chasm in which it lies is 5,200 feet below the top of Mount Olivet. The colour of the hills adds to the effect. Dull greenish-grey till they reach nearly to the Jordan valley, they are then stopped, at right angles, by a range of flat-topped hills of mingled pink, yellow, and white. The hills of Judah, on the right, looked like crumpled waves of light-brown paper, more or less strewn with dark sand—the ideal of a wilderness; those before me were cultivated in the nearer valleys and on the slopes beyond. Behind the pinkish hills on which I looked down, lay the ruins of Jericho and the famous circle of the Jordan, beneath the mud-slant of which lies the wreck of the Cities of the Plain: then came the deep-blue waters of the Dead Sea, and beyond them the pink, flat-topped mountains of Moab, rising as high as my standing-place. To the far south of these mountains, on a small eminence, lay the town of Kerak, once the capital of King Mesha, the Kir Haresh, Kir Hareseth, Kir Heres,

and Kir Moab of the prophets.[1] There, when Israel pressed their siege against his capital, King Mesha offered up on the brick city walls to the national god, Chemosh, his eldest son, "who should have reigned in his stead." Nearer at hand, in the same range, but hidden from view, frowning over a wild gorge below, lay the black walls of Machærus, within which John the Baptist pined in the dungeons of Herod Antipas, till the sword of "the fox's" headsman set his great soul free to rise to a foremost place in heaven. And at the mouth of that deep chasm, amongst rushing waters, veiled by oleanders, lay Callirhoë, with its famous hot springs, where Herod the Great nearly died when carried over to try the baths, and whence he had to be got back as best might be to Jericho, to breathe his last there a few days after. South of this lay the wide opening in the hills which marked the entrance of the Arnon into the Dead Sea, once the northern boundary of Moab.[2] To the north, across the Jordan, rose the mountains of Gilead, from Gerasa, beyond the Jabbok, where Jacob divided his herds and flocks, and sent them forward in separate droves, for fear of his brother Esau, and near which, at Peniel, he wrestled with the angel through a long night.[3] Then, sweeping southwards, still beyond the Jordan, which flowed, unseen, in its deep sunken bed, one saw Baal Peor, where the Israelites sinned, and Mount Pisgah, whence Moses looked over the Promised Land he was not to enter, and Mount Nebo, where he died, though we know not what special peaks to associate with these memories. Where the Jordan valley opens, the course of the stream was shown by a winding green line threading a white border of silt and

[1] Isa. xv. 1; xvi. 11; Jer. xlviii. 31, 36; Isa. xvi. 7; 2 Kings iii. 25.
[2] Num. xxi. 13, 26; Deut. iii. 8; Josh. xii. 1; Isa. xvi. 2;; Jer. xlviii. 20.
[3] Gen. xxxii. 16, 24.

stones. At its broadest part, before reaching the Dead Sea, now lying so peacefully and in such surpassing beauty below me, the valley becomes a wide plain, green with spring grain and groves of fruit-trees, including palms. Such a view, so rich in hallowed associations, can be seen only in Palestine.

The Mount of Olives has been holy ground from the almost immemorial past. On its top David was "worshipping God" on his flight from Jerusalem to escape from Absalom's revolt, his eyes in tears, his head covered with his mantle, his feet bare, when Hushai, his friend, came, as if in answer to the prayers even then just rising, and undertook to return to the city and undo the counsel of Ahithophel.[1] In Ezekiel's vision the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city—that is, on the Mount of Olives;[2] and it was on it, also, that Zechariah, in spirit, saw the Lord standing to hold judgment on His enemies; and it was this hill which His almighty power was, one day, to cleave "toward the east and toward the west," so that there would be "a very great valley" through which His people might have a broad path for flight.[3] It was while standing, or resting, on this hill that our Lord foretold the doom impending over Jerusalem;[4] and it was from some part of it, near Bethany, that He ascended to heaven.[5]

Making my way down again to Gethsemane, I crossed the little stone bridge over what represents the old channel of the Kedron, when that torrent was a reality, and rode up a path to the St. Stephen's Gate. From this point the comparatively level ground, extending along the

[1] 2 Sam. xv. 32.
[2] Ezek. xi. 23.
[3] Zech. xiv. 4 ff.
[4] Matt. xxiv. 2; Mark xiii. 2; Luke xix. 41.
[5] Acts i. 9, 12; Luke xxiv. 50.

eastern wall of the Temple enclosure, is a Mahommedan cemetery; each grave with some superstructure, necessary from the shallowness of the resting-place beneath. Over the richer dead a parallelogram of squared stones, or of stone or brick plastered over, but in every case with head and foot stones jutting out high above the rest, is the commonest form. The poorer dead have over them simply a half-circle of plastered bricks or small stones, the length of the grave, with the two stones rising at the head and feet. No care whatever is taken of the ground, over which man and beast walk at pleasure, nor does there seem to be any thought of keeping the graves in repair. Coarse herbage, weeds, and great bunches of broad-leaved plants of the lily kind, grow where they like amidst the utterly neglected dead.

On the north side of Jerusalem, the natural rock, cut into perpendicular scarps of greater or less height, forms at different points the foundation of the city walls. At other parts, the rock juts out below the walls in its natural roughness, lifting up the weather-stained, many-angled masonry into the most picturesque outline. On most of the northern aspects of the walls, cultivated strips run, here and there, between them and the road, the counterparts of similar belts and patches along their inner side. Near the Damascus Gate, the remains of an old moat heighten the effect of the walls, while a mound of rubbish on the other side of the road, thrown down during the building of the Austrian Hospice, has helped to confuse the ancient appearance of the spot. About 100 yards east of the gate, in the rock, nineteen feet below the wall, you come on the entrance to the so-called Cotton Grotto, which is in reality an extensive quarry, of great antiquity, stretching far below the houses of the city. The opening was discovered in 1852, but is so filled with

masses of rubbish that it can only be entered by stooping very low, or by going in backwards and letting one's self down some five feet to the floor of the quarry. From this black mouth the gulf stretches away, at first over a great bed of earth from the outside, then over rough stones. The roof, about thirty feet high, is coarsely hewn out, and the ground underfoot, as you go on for 645 feet, in a south-easterly direction, under the houses and lanes of Bezetha, is littered with great mounds of chips, or heaped with masses of stone, in part fallen from the roof. The excavations slope pretty steeply from the very entrance to a depth of 100 feet at their far end. Some boys were playing in the road as I approached, and clamoured to guide me, hurrying away to buy candles and matches with money I gave them on accepting their service. At one place, deep in the heart of the quarry, was a small, round basin, with some water in it; the hollow worn by the slow dripping of some broken cistern in the town overhead. The lime dissolved by the water hung here, and at some other parts, in long stalactites from the roof, and rose in white mounds of stalagmite from the ground. It was hard work to follow my active guides, who often gave me less light than was pleasant, as they tripped lightly over the masons' rubbish, lying just as the workmen had left it. But a word brought them back, and they were very careful in holding their candles down at specially difficult places, where huge stones, cut thousands of years ago, but never used, lay in dire confusion. The roof was supported, at intervals, by very rough masses of rock. This great excavation dates from no one can tell what period, and lay forgotten and unknown for centuries. You still see clearly the size and form of the masons' and hewers' tools, for the marks of the chisel and the pick are as fresh as if the quarriers and the stone-cutters had just

left their work. They appear to have been associated in gangs of five or six; each man making a cutting in the rock perpendicularly, four inches broad, till he had reached the required depth; after which, wedges of timber, driven in and wetted, forced off the mass of stone by their swelling. It is touching to notice that some blocks have been only half cut away from their bed, like the great stone at the quarry of Baalbek, or the enormous obelisk in the granite quarries of Assouan.

In all probability it was from these quarries that Solomon obtained the huge stones which we see built into what remains of the Temple walls, and of its area. They were evidently dressed before being removed, so as to be ready to be laid at once, one on another, for otherwise it would be impossible to account for the vast quantities of chips and fragments on the bottom of the quarry. We can thus understand the words of the sacred writer who tells us that "the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready at the quarry; and there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building."[1] But what can we think of a man who could doom his wretched subjects—rendering, we may assume, forced, unpaid labour in this case as in his other great undertakings—to toil in the darkness and dampness of these subterranean wastes, not only in cutting out the stone from the rock, but in squaring and finishing it, for a temple to Jehovah? How many lives must have been worn out in these gloomy abysses! Shards of pottery—perhaps the vessels in which they once put their humble meals—with fragments of charcoal, and of long-decayed wood, and the skeletons of men and animals, were found in the quarries when they were re-discovered, some thirty-five years ago. Niches in

[1] 1 Kings vi. 7.

the rock, and spots black with the smoke of lamps or candles, show where, thousands of years ago, a feeble light shone out on the pinched features and worn frames of the lonely toilers, the equals, after a few years, of Solomon in the dusty commonwealth of death, in spite of all his glory while he lived, and of all their sweat and misery at his hand.

Opposite this stupendous quarry, but a little to the east, there is a smaller one, known as the Grotto of Jeremiah, from the fancy of the Rabbis that the prophet lived in this cavern after the fall of Jerusalem, and wrote the Book of Lamentations with the ruins of the city thus before him. It is a vast excavation, though dwarfed by comparison with its rival close at hand. What appears cannot, however, give any idea of what has been removed, for it is evident that the rock at one time joined that on which the wall stands, and has been cleared away, in the course of ages, till we have the slow ascent that now begins from the Damascus Gate. The quarry extends for about 100 feet into the rock, and underneath it are vast cisterns, the roof of the largest of which is borne up by great square pillars of stone; both the roof and the sides being plastered over. There was excellent water in the cistern, at the depth of nearly forty feet from the top: an illustration of the universal presence of huge reservoirs for collecting surface water, where springs are so rare. In front of the cave is a garden, planted with different kinds of fruit-trees, and separated from the road by a stone wall of no great height. In the garden, the remains of a building of large size, of the time of the Crusaders, were laid bare in 1873; a range of stone mangers showing that it had been the old hostelry of the Templars, which was just outside the Damascus Gate, then known as that of St. Stephen. The spade and pickaxe have still much to

unearth, at every step round the city. In the mouth of the cave a Mahommedan family has a cottage, and thus, as the ground over the cavern is a Mahommedan burial-place, this household sleep nightly underneath the dead, from whom they are divided by only a thin strip of rock. This spot, according to Rabbinical tradition, was once "the House of Stoning," that is, the place of public execution under the Jewish law. This is noteworthy, in connection with the question of the site of Calvary.

There is little in the New Testament to fix the exact position of the "mount" on which our Lord was crucified, though the statement that He "suffered without the gate"[1] is enough to prove that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is not on the true site. The name Golgotha, "the Place of a Skull," may well have referred rather to the shape of the ground than to the place so called being that of public execution, and, if this be so, a spot reminding one of a skull by its form must be sought, outside the city. It must, besides, be near one of the great roads, for those who were "passing by" are expressly noticed in the Gospels.[2] That Joseph of Arimathæa carried the body to his own new tomb, hewn out in the rock, and standing in the midst of a garden, outside the city,[3] requires, further, that Calvary should be found near the great Jewish cemetery of the time of our Lord. This lay on the north side of Jerusalem, stretching from close to the gates, along the different ravines, and up the low slopes which rise on all sides. The sepulchre of Simon the Just, dating from the third century before Christ, is in this part, and so also is the noble tomb of Helena, Queen of Adiabene, hewn out in the first century of our era, and still fitted with a rolling stone, to close its entrance, as was that of our Lord. Ancient tombs abound, moreover, close at hand,

[1] Heb. xiii. 12. [2] Mark xv. 29. [3] Matt. xxvii. 60; John xx. 15.

showing themselves amidst the low hilly ground wherever we turn on the roadside. Everything thus tends to show that this cemetery was that which was in use in the days of our Lord.

In connection with this, it has been found, by a comparison of many hundred Jewish tombs in Palestine, that the earlier mode of constructing them was to cut a narrow, deep hole for each body in the sides of the rock, the breadth and length of the human figure; the dead being put into it with the feet towards the outside. At the time of Christ, however, this arrangement had given place to another, in which a receptacle for each body was cut out lengthwise, along the side of the tomb, like a sarcophagus, or grave. The tomb of our Lord must have been of this class, since two angels are described as sitting, "the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain,"[1] which could not have happened if it had been one of the ancient deep holes in the rock, into which the body had been put. The rolling stone, moreover, such as was used in the case of our Lord's tomb, to close the entrance, was introduced shortly before His day, and is found only in connection with tombs of the later kind. But this kind of tomb, with this mode of closing the entrance, is not found at Jerusalem, except in the tombs outside the Damascus Gate.

On these grounds it has been urged with much force that Calvary must be sought near the city, but outside the ancient gate, on the north approach, close to a main road, and these requirements the knoll or swell over the Grotto of Jeremiah remarkably fulfils.[2] Rising gently towards the north, its slowly-rounded top might easily have obtained, from its shape, the name of "a Skull"—in Latin, *Calvaria;* in Aramaic, Golgotha. This spot has been

[1] John xx. 12. [2] *Pal. Fund Memoirs.*

associated from the earliest times with the martyrdom of St. Stephen, to whom a church was dedicated near it before the fifth century, and who could only have been stoned at the usual place of public execution. And this, as Captain Conder shows, is fixed by local tradition at the spot which is still pointed out by the Jews of Jerusalem as "the Place of Stoning," where offenders were not only put to death, but hung up by the hands till sunset, after execution. As if to make the identification still more complete, the busy road which has led to the north in all ages passes close by the knoll, branching off, a little further on, to Gibeon, Damascus, and Ramah. It was the custom of the Romans to crucify transgressors at the sides of the busiest public roads, and thus, as we have seen, they treated our Saviour when they subjected Him to this most shameful of deaths.[1] Here then, apparently, on this bare rounded knoll, rising about thirty feet above the road, with no building on it, but covered in part with Mahommedan graves, the low yellow cliff of the Grotto of Jeremiah looking out from its southern end, the Saviour of the world appears to have passed away, with that great cry which has been held to betoken cardiac rupture—for it would seem that He literally died of a broken heart. Before Him lay outspread the guilty city which had clamoured for His blood; beyond it, the pale slopes of Olivet, from which He was shortly to ascend in triumph to the right hand of the Majesty on High; and in the distance, but clear and seemingly near, the pinkish-yellow mountains of Moab, lighting up, it may be, the fading eyes of the Innocent One with the remembrance that His death would one day bring back lost mankind—not Israel alone—from the east, and the west, and the north, and the south, to the kingdom of God.

[1] Luke xxiii. 35.

The tomb in which our Lord was buried will be, perhaps, for ever unknown, but it was some one of those, we may be sure, still found in the neighbourhood of "the Place of Stoning." Among these, one has been specially noticed by Captain Conder, as possibly the very tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa, thus greatly honoured. It is cut in the face of a curious rock platform, measuring seventy paces each way, and situated about 200 yards west of the Grotto of Jeremiah. The platform is roughly scarped on all sides, apparently by human art, and on the west there is a higher piece of rock, the sides of which are also rudely scarped. The rest of the space is fairly level, but there seem to be traces of the foundations of a surrounding wall, in some low mounds near the edge of the platform. In this low bank of rock is an ancient tomb, rudely cut, with its entrance to the east. The doorway is much broken, and there is a loophole, or window, four feet wide, on both sides of it. An outer space, seven feet square, has been cut in the rock, and two stones, placed in this, give the idea that they may have been intended to hold in its proper position a rolling stone with which the tomb was closed. On the north is a side entrance, leading into a chamber, with a single stone grave cut along its side, and thence into a cavern about eight paces square and ten feet high, with a well-mouth in its roof.

Another chamber, within this, is reached by a descent of two steps, and measures six feet by nine. On each side of it, an entrance, twenty inches broad, and about five and a half feet high, has been opened into another chamber beyond; the passages, which are four and a half feet long, having a ledge or bench of rock at the side. Two bodies could thus be laid in each of the three chambers, which, in turn, lead to two other chambers about five feet square, with narrow entrances. Their floors

were still thinly strewn with human bones when Captain Conder explored them.[1]

"It would be bold," says that careful student of Bible archæology, "to hazard the suggestion that the single Jewish sepulchre thus found, which dates from about the time of Christ, is indeed the tomb in the garden, nigh unto the place called Golgotha, which belonged to the rich Joseph of Arimathæa. Yet its appearance, so near the old place of execution, and so far from the other old cemeteries of the city, is extremely remarkable." I am sorry to say that a group of Jewish houses is growing up round the spot. The rock is being blasted for building-stone, and the tomb, unless special measures are taken for its preservation, may soon be entirely destroyed.

[1] *Pal. Fund Rept.*, 1881, pp. 203—4.

CHAPTER XXVI.

JERUSALEM AND BETHANY.

A FEW steps from what seems so reasonably to be identified as Calvary bring you to the Damascus Gate, which lies at the bottom of a slope. There is of course only the natural surface for travel; made roads being virtually unknown where the Crescent reigns. A short distance from the gate large hewn stones lie at the side of the track, the remains of some fine building of past ages, now, like so many others, utterly gone. On one side, the road has a steep bank, several feet deep, with no protection; on the other, ledges of rock now and then crop out. Balloon-like swellings from the flat roofs, beneath which only a few small windows are to be seen; the tall mosque of the dervishes, east of the gate; some minarets; the dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and that of the Mosque of Omar,[1] fill up the foreground; the yellow, bare slopes of the Mount of Olives, dotted still with the tree from which it takes its name, and the pink mountains of Moab, with the lights and shadows of their heights and hollows, close in the horizon. The gate itself is a fine, deep, Pointed arch, with slender pillars on each side, and an inscription above stating that it was rebuilt in the year A.D. 1564. The front, on each side, is in a line with the walls, though a little higher, but a square crenellated tower of the height

[1] The popular name is used in these pages, as being better known than the new one, "the Dome of the Rock."

of the centre juts out on either side, with a projecting stone look-out near the top, at the corner of both, in shape like a small house. Excavations show that there has always been a gate at this spot. A reservoir and a fragment of an ancient wall have been brought to light close by; and underneath the present gate there still exist subterranean chambers, of unknown age, the surface level having been greatly altered in the course of time. The masonry of the gate is very fine, some of the stones measuring seven feet long and four feet broad: the remains, doubtless, of earlier structures. Facing the north, this, the finest gate of Jerusalem, has derived its name from the trade between the city and the distant Syrian capital. Situated at the weakest part of the town, where alone an enemy can approach without natural difficulties in his way, it has always been strongly fortified. It was, almost without doubt, through the gate which stood on this spot that our Lord bore His cross;[1] and it was through this, also, that St. Paul at a later date was led away, in the night, to Cæsarea;[2] for, as I have said, the great military road to the north must, in all ages, have begun at this point.

The ground rises very gradually towards the west from the gate; the wall running along very imposingly over the rough heights and hollows of the natural rock. A long train of camels, tied one behind another, with huge bales of goods on each, and a man riding the first and the last, two or three travellers on asses, and one or two on horses, all of them thoroughly Oriental in dress and features, paced northwards as I turned from the dried mud which does duty for a road, with its immemorial neglect on all sides, and rode on towards the Joppa Gate. With a few short intervals, some fields of no great breadth run along the outer face of the walls in this part, the remains

[1] Heb. xiii. 12. [2] Acts xxiii. 31.

of the fosse stopping them on the one side, and a low wall of dry stone, alongside the road, on the other. The rock coming in flat sheets to the surface here, at different points, made the track more like a civilised highway; and, on the country side of it, gardens, within stone walls, brightened the route. Until recently the wide space between the olive-groves, farther north, and the city wall, was a naked stretch of broken rock, or a mere waste, thinly sprinkled with grass, which withered into hay after the brief spring. Of late years, however, the ground has fallen into the hands of Christians, and this, explain it how we may, accounts for the change, which is just as marked, in similar cases, everywhere in Palestine. Industry—the industry which always in this land characterises our religion—has made the wilderness blossom like the rose.

In early times this suburb was diligently utilised, as the remains of numerous cisterns and tanks sufficiently prove. Rich Jews had their fine country-houses here, under the shadow of their olive and fig trees, and wealthy Roman officials and residents doubtless followed their example, for the shallow shares of the Eastern plough constantly turn up fragments of polished marble and cubes of mosaic flooring. It must, indeed, have been the same all round Jerusalem, for at two different places on the Mount of Olives, where excavations have recently been made, the mosaic floors of baths and rooms have been laid bare, with portions of the columns and delicately finished walls of the mansions to which they belonged. Even now, those who can afford to do it leave the city in the hot months, to enjoy the coolness of the orchards outside, and no foreign resident then lives within the gates who can manage to get a house beyond them. That it has been always the same, admits of no question; in fact, the whole upper Kedron valley was so overgrown with

dwellings in the generation before the destruction of the city by Titus, that the Jews enclosed it within a new city wall. But it is idle to look for any notable remains of mansions, or of public buildings, in this part, any more than in the city itself, for every hostile force has in turn encamped on the north side of Jerusalem, and signalised its presence by widespread destruction. How much blood of the most widely separate races has this soil drunk in! Here perished thousands of Roman legionaries and auxiliaries drawn from half a world; here fell thousands of turbaned Saracens; here the Crusaders from the West sang their Frankish songs round their watch-fires; and since then, rocks and walls have echoed with the war-cries of the rough hordes of Central Asia, now ossified into the modern Turk. Such human associations, lighting up the darkness of the past with the memory of great events, give even so poor and commonplace a scene an interest which no mere natural beauty could excite.

At the north-west corner of the walls the ground sinks, southwards, to the Joppa Gate, and rises slowly towards the north-west. Going west, we reach the eastern slope of the Valley of Hinnom, from which we first set out in our circuit of the Holy City. The top of the valley is covered with an extensive Mahommedan cemetery, in the middle of which lies the broad, flat sweep of a shallow pool—the Birket-el-Mamilla—which is fed, in winter and spring, by the rains. It is from this that the water found in Hezekiah's Pool, in the city, flows, after the rains, through a small aqueduct which is open at different points. Crossing the sadly-neglected city of the dead, with its forest of head and foot stones, rising higher than the perpendicular slabs of our churchyards though generally narrower than these, one is surprised to reach, on the farther side, where a noble terebinth stands as outpost, an actually

good piece of road leading to the Joppa Gate. As there is hardly such a thing as a made road in the whole country, from Dan to Beersheba, the existence of this short fragment seems inexplicable. It was the beneficial result of a very curious impulse to diligence. A widespread tradition affirmed that a great treasure had, in some past age, been buried not far from the Joppa Gate, and in order to secure this, some adventurers gave out that they wished to make the road, and got permission to do so. This apparently wild venture had, however, more justification in the East than it would have had with us, for it has often happened that in time of war, or to escape the extortion of pashas, men have hidden their money or jewels in the ground, and have died without revealing the place, so that their wealth has been lost to their heirs. It is, indeed, still common to do so in troublous times all over the East, the experiences of the Indian Mutiny of 1857 showing many examples, so that, as in the days of Christ, it is nothing unusual to find treasure hidden in a field.[1]

The road from the terebinth-tree to the Joppa Gate is nearly level, opening on the wide vacant space sacred to loungers, to the stalls of small dealers, to asses waiting for hire, and to camels awaiting their burdens. This spot is generally very bustling, but especially so as the noon of Friday, the Mahommedan Sunday, approaches. Everyone then strives to get into the city, some on horses, asses, or camels, but the great majority on foot; young and old, men and women, rich and poor, in all the parti-coloured brightness of Oriental costume; for at twelve on the sacred day the gates are shut for an hour, and all the faithful think it right to hurry at that time to the Temple area, to pray before the Mosque of Omar, the holiest spot in the Mahommedan world, except the Kaabah at Mecca.

[1] Matt. xiii. 44.

Just so it must have been in ancient times, at nine each morning, and at three each afternoon, the hour of morning and evening prayer among the ancient Jews, when men "went up into the temple, to pray."[1] And just as, in our time, a Mahommedan stops and prays wherever the fixed moment for doing so may find him, his face towards Mecca, so the Jew, if unable to get to the Temple Hill before the horns of the Levites, now superseded by the cry of the muezzin, summoned him to devotion, turned his face towards the Holy of Holies, wherever he might be, and repeated the prescribed prayers, still heard in the synagogues, for, even then, forms of prayer were universally used by the Chosen People. The shutting of the city gate has its origin in a belief among the Moslem that the Christians would, at some time, take the Holy City during the great hour of prayer, if this precaution were neglected. Except the Joppa Gate, all the entrances to Jerusalem are, further, closed each night at sunset: a custom as old, at least, as the days of Joshua, for Rahab tells the King of Jericho that the two Jewish spies went out of the city "about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark."[2]

To realise the daily life of ancient Jerusalem, it is necessary to have before us not only the character of the streets, narrow, rough, and sometimes sunk in the middle at once for a gutter and a track for animals; the flat-roofed houses, with their balloon swellings to cover the stone arches of the rooms; the strange, dark-arched bazaars, like long narrow tunnels, with the booths of the traders on each side; the dress of the people; the character of the shops and the articles exposed for sale; but also the configuration of the ground, the source of the ancient water-supply, and much else.

[1] Luke xviii. 10. [2] Josh. ii. 5.

At present, Jerusalem receives water, so essential in any country, so pressingly vital in a hot climate, from springs, wells, cisterns, pools or reservoirs, and rivulets led by conduits into the city.

The Fountain of the Virgin, in the valley of the Kedron, or of Jehoshaphat, is the only true spring known to exist in Jerusalem, rising, it appears, from a living source beneath the great Temple vaults, and supplying the many fountains flowing from of old in the Temple area, and now sparkling round the Mosque of Omar, as well as maintaining the Fountain of the Virgin and the Pool of Siloam. Such a provision of ever fresh and limpid water was an essential in ancient worship, which in every religion, at least in warm climates, required copious supplies, both for ablution and to wash away the blood of the sacrifices. Without such a provision, indeed, the Temple could hardly have been raised on Mount Moriah. This local water-supply was also the very life of the city itself, in times of siege; Hezekiah taking the precaution, as we have seen,[1] to bring its stream, by a subterranean tunnel from the Virgin's Fountain, which was carefully covered up, to a point within the walls to which access was at all times easy by a rock-cut staircase, a long gallery in the limestone, and a deep shaft. Milton speaks of it as the

> "——brook that flowed
> Fast by the oracle of God:"

a holy association which frequently occurs in the Sacred Writings. "There is a [perennial] river," chants the Psalmist, "the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High."[2] "All my springs [my sources of delight] are in thee,"

[1] See Vol. I., p. 550.

[2] Ps. xlvi. 4.

says another of the sacred odes.[1] At the Feast of Tabernacles a golden vessel, holding about a pint and a half, was filled daily from Siloam, and carried up to the Temple, amidst music and jubilation; so that the Rabbis say, "He who has not seen the joy of the water-drawing has never seen joy in his life." To this Isaiah alludes when he writes, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation;"[2] thinking of the exiles from all lands resuming the solemnities of the Temple worship. In Ezekiel's vision, moreover, the sacred spring in the Temple rock is to swell into a mighty river, flowing eastward and westward into the glens of Hinnom and Kedron, and pouring down in fertilising streams to the Dead Sea, whose waters it is to turn to a living flood.

On the west side of the wall of the old Temple enclosure there is a well which seems to tap an old watercourse discovered far below the ancient surface, on which, as we have seen, lay the huge stones of Robinson's Arch, thirty feet below the present one. The shaft, which is eighty feet deep, passes entirely through rubbish into the old rock-hewn conduit which runs somewhere to the south: a relic, perhaps, of the great works undertaken by Hezekiah, to supply the city with water.[3] There may be a secret spring, now unknown, from which this stream flows, but part of it must come from the infiltration of rain. Permeating such a mass of foul rubbish, it is, however, unfit for drinking, though freely used for that purpose by the inhabitants.

The oldest cisterns in Jerusalem have been made by hewing out in the rock a bottle-shaped excavation at the bottom of a deep shaft. The surface-rains, and the percolation of water between the layers of rock, are sufficient to keep a small supply in these reservoirs even in the

[1] Ps. lxxxvii. 7. [2] Isa. xii. 3. [3] 2 Chron. xxxii. 30.

driest weather. Many of them must be of great antiquity, and it is quite possible that, among others, that in which Jeremiah was for a time confined[1] may still be in use. Besides these there are great subterranean tanks, from forty to sixty feet deep, hewn out of the soft limestone, which in Jerusalem underlies a harder bed of the same stone. The roofs of flat rock are thus strong enough to support themselves, where the tank is of moderate size, but where the space hollowed out is large, they are upheld by pillars of stone left by the hewers. Small holes through the upper hard limestone afforded access to the softer rock for these gigantic quarryings, but the labour of passing through such narrow apertures all the stones and chips removed must have been immense; nor is it too much to believe that the laborious plan of leaving the native rock as a roof shows that these tanks were dug before the use of the arch was known. In any case, they restore one feature of ancient Jerusalem.

A third form of cistern is that of a simple excavation in the rock, with an arch thrown over as a roof. This kind of reservoir, and the great rock tanks, were supplied in ancient times by aqueducts, but now depend on impure surface drainage. Still a fourth class of cisterns has been built, in modern times, in the rubbish over the ancient city, depending entirely, of course, on the rains. In the hands of Europeans, these, being carefully cemented and cleaned out each year, supply clear and good water, but those in the native houses are sadly different. In their keenness to gather all the water they can, the owners guide all that falls on the roof, or into the court-yard, to the cistern, and even collect it from the streets, which are habitually foul with every form of abomination. Hence, as the year advances, and the supply of water gets

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 6.

low, the hideous deposits in the bottom of the cisterns are stirred in drawing for daily wants, with a painful result, alike in the horrible mixture drunk by the population and in the smell given off. Fever, widely spread, inevitably follows, with numerous deaths, but no penalty seems to rouse the population to the most elementary regard for the commonest laws of cleanliness and health.

A city in itself so strangely unprovided with living springs could not, however, depend in its prosperous days simply on rain-water tanks or cisterns, or on the flow from the Virgin's Fountain; and, hence, large pools, fed by aqueducts, were added, outside the city and within. There are two, as we have seen, in the Valley of Hinnom; then there are the two pools of Siloam, and one north of the city; while traditions exist of others, now buried beneath rubbish, at three different points outside the walls. Within the walls were the so-called Pools of Hezekiah and Bethesda, now virtually useless. I have spoken of all except the pool north of the city, once the largest of the whole, but now almost filled up with soil washed into it by the rains. Situated at the head of the Kedron valley, it was admirably placed for catching the drainage of the uplands around it, the supply doubtless being brought into the city by a conduit, though no traces of one have yet been discovered.

Besides the well on the rubbish of the Tyropœon, there is only that known as Job's Well, at the lower side of the junction of the Kedron and Hinnom valleys. Connected with this is a tunnel, about six feet high, and from two to three feet wide, cut for more than eighteen hundred feet along the bed of the Hinnom Valley, to the west, at a depth of from seventy to ninety feet below the ground, and reached, at intervals, by flights of steps hewn

in the rock. Such a work, dating from Bible times, shows the spirit and enterprise of the ancient population, but it also proves that the supply of water for the city has always been a pressing question. It must have been felt that the supply from all other sources was insufficient, or not always secure, else an undertaking so serious, at a level so greatly below the city, would not have been projected or carried out. Its object seems to have been to collect the water which flowed over the lower hard limestone strata after percolating through the softer beds above them.

To realise the vigorous life of the ancient Jewish citizens, as shown in their arrangements for a copious water-supply, we must, moreover, restore in fancy the provision they made for bringing it from a distance by aqueducts. Thus, from the Pools of Solomon, beyond the ridge on the south, the water was led along a conduit to Bethlehem; then carried under that town by a rock-hewn tunnel, and brought on in another conduit to the Temple area, into the huge reservoirs of which it emptied itself. The length of this gigantic work, in all its windings, is over thirteen miles[1]; an amazing triumph of engineering for the days of Solomon, or even of Hezekiah, during whose reign the first rude beginnings of Rome were founded. Indeed, when we trace it, as it entered and passed through Jerusalem, wonder is even heightened, so great are the difficulties overcome. Crossing the Valley of Hinnom a little above the Sultan's Pool, on pointed arches sunk to the level of the ground, it winds round the southern slope of Mount Zion, and enters the city at the west side of the old Tyropœon Valley, crossing which by the help of Wilson's Arch, it poured its waters into the Temple cisterns. Pipes from it supplied numerous fountains in

[1] 70,000 feet.

the lower part of the city; and inside the Temple area there was an elaborate system of reservoirs, regulating the flow of the stream, and providing for the discharge of the waste into the great drain that ran down the east side of Mount Moriah to the Kedron valley. This vast arrangement, however, has long ago been allowed to fall into disrepair, and though occasionally patched up so as to work, in part, for a time, it is so rarely of any use that we may regard it only as a magnificent relic of "the glory of Solomon," whose greatness it vividly brings before us. For since a large supply of water must have been required at the Temple from the very first, it seems natural to accept the tradition that this huge aqueduct, with the pools from which it flows, and the amazing system of reservoirs under the Temple area into which its waters were poured, are a memorial of the achievements of the son of David.

But even this elaborate work is thrown into comparative shade by the "high-level" aqueduct which brought water at such a height as to supply the lofty streets of Mount Zion. South of Solomon's Pools, in a glen called Wady Byar, a flight of rock-hewn steps leads down to a chamber sixty feet below the ground at its upper end, and seventy at its lower. From this, a tunnel, from five to twenty-five feet high, stretches up the valley, away from Jerusalem, ending at a natural cleft in the rocks, from which water freely comes. From the lower end, a similar tunnel runs for nearly five miles through hard limestone, reaching day, at last, on the under side of a great dam of masonry, which crosses the whole valley. Shafts, sixty to seventy feet deep, have been sunk in the rock, in the course of this long excavation, to facilitate the work; the dam being intended, as it seems, to keep back the surface-water till it soaked down to the

channel opened for it beneath. About three furlongs below the dam, the channel, for this space running above ground, enters another tunnel a third of a mile in length, and a hundred and fifteen feet beneath the surface, and in some parts fourteen feet high. A masonry channel then winds round the hill, and, sinking below the ground again, crosses the valley at the head of which lie the Pools of Solomon, tapping the so-called "Sealed Fountain," and running along the side of the Valley of Urtas, till, near Bethlehem, it flowed, anciently, into a great tank. From this the water was carried, by means of an inverted syphon two miles long, over the valley in which is Rachel's tomb. This part of the great work is itself an extraordinary illustration of the skill of the ancient engineers who contrived it. The tube for the water is fifteen inches in diameter, the joints, which seem to have been ground or turned, being connected by an exceedingly hard cement, and set on a frame of blocks of stone, bedded in rubble masonry all round to the thickness of three feet. Unfortunately, we cannot trace the last section of the undertaking, which has been so completely destroyed that it is not known where the aqueduct finally entered Jerusalem. One fact, however, and that an astonishing one, has been discovered, viz., that it delivered water at a point twenty feet higher than the sill of the Joppa Gate, for it seems beyond question to have been the source from which the bronze statues in Herod's palace gardens, spoken of by Josephus as pouring water into the fountains, obtained their supply; and the palace stood on the top of Mount Zion. The glory of this great aqueduct appears due to the genius of Herod, and it must, therefore, in the days of our Lord, have been one of the recent wonders of his reign. Or was it, in part at least, due to Pontius Pilate? though his aqueduct may more probably have been one

on an even greater scale, traces of which have recently been discovered, and by which water was brought from Hebron.

It is strange to think that a city distinguished by such gigantic provision for its well-being should have come into prominence at so late a period in the history of Israel. Till the close of David's reign at Hebron it was still in the hands of the Jebusites, who seem only to have occupied Mount Zion; Moriah being still left to the husbandman.[1] Ezekiel might say with truth, "Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite."[2] Here only, so far as we know, the original inhabitants of Palestine kept their footing in the hills for centuries after the Hebrew conquest, thanks to the almost impregnable position of their stronghold. Built on a summit of the central ridge of the country, it was isolated by deep valleys on all sides but the north, and hence, when once secured for Israel, it was the main guarantee of prolonged national life. Mount Zion rises no less than 2,550 feet above the sea, and is reached on all sides by a steady ascent, differing in this from Hebron, which, though the hills immediately north of it are nearly 1,000 feet higher,[3] itself lies in a valley, and is easy of approach from all sides. Jerusalem, on the contrary, is pre-eminently a mountain city, alike in its climate and in its military strength. As such, it is sung in inspired lyrics and imaged by prophets: "His foundation is on the holy mountains."[4] It is "the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion,"[5] "which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever." It is God's

[1] This is shown by the story of Araunah the Jebusite.
[2] Ezek. xvi. 3, 4, 5.
[3] 3,500 feet above sea-level. (Conder, *Handbook*, p. 210).
[4] Ps. lxxxvii. 1. [5] Ps. xlviii. 1. [6] Ps. cxxv. 2.

"holy hill."[1] Jerusalem was "Ariel," "the Lion of God," "the city where David dwelt;"[2] its rocky height, the lion's lair. "In Judah is God known; His name is great in Israel; in Salem also is His tent, and His dwelling place in Zion."[3] Cut off by the deep ravines around it from the possibility of wide extension, Jerusalem was noted in the earliest times for its compactness: it was "builded as a city that is compact together,"[4] though the sloping sides of Hinnom and Olivet on the south and east, and the nearly level ground on the north of the city, permitted the growth of noble suburbs, as wealth increased. But even where these had been laid out in gardens round the mansions of the rich, the hills swelled up on every side as a natural defence, recalling the verse of the Psalm, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever."[5]

As at present, so in the past, Jerusalem was defended by a circuit of walls. In recent years it has extended slightly beyond its fortifications, and they would be of no real value against artillery, if ever it should be, with infinite labour, dragged up from the coast plains. But in ancient times its walls were a vital necessity, and hence they constantly figure in the sacred writings. "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks."[6] It was through the gates in these ramparts that Jehovah was to enter His city, when the Ark, as His emblem, was carried up in triumph through them by David, from the house of Obededom, and it may have been at this high event in the religious history of the nation that choirs of

[1] Ps. xliii. 3.
[2] Isa. xxix. 1, 2.
[3] Ps. lxxvi. 1, 2.
[4] Ps. cxxii. 3.
[5] Ps. cxxv. 2.
[6] Ps. xlviii. 12, 13.

Levites sang, when the Palladium of Israel was thus slowly ascending to its mountain sanctuary, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye *ancient* doors, and the King of Glory shall come in!"[1] And it is "out of Zion," His stronghold, that Jehovah will raise His thunder-like war-cry, and lead down the warriors of Israel against the heathen, in the day when He shall tread them down in the valley of Jehoshaphat as men tread the vintage grapes.[2]

Among the different localities around the city, none is more worthy of a thoughtful visit than Bethany. Starting from the Joppa Gate with a friend, on two hired asses, we passed slowly round to the path that slants down from the Temple walls and the Mahommedan cemetery, to the bridge over the long-vanished Kedron. Crossing it, perhaps at the spot where our Lord often crossed it nearly nineteen hundred years ago, we passed in front of Gethsemane, southwards; our beasts keeping up their pattering walk, for it is always to be remembered that no one ever rides faster than a walking pace in a country utterly without roads, like Palestine. Gradually the track bent to the east, when we were opposite Ophel, on the other side of the valley, and climbed the south-west slope of the Mount of Olives, the lower part of which we had been skirting since leaving Gethsemane. There was no pretence of a road—simply a track worn by the traffic of ages, the rock cropping out at intervals in broken layers on the upper and under sides, and even on the path itself. The Mount of Offence lay on our right hand, rising from the hollow below. At the bend of the road, where we turned our faces almost east, the huge swell of Olivet rose in an easy slope 300 feet above us on the one hand, while, on the other, a little way off, was the

[1] Ps. xxiv. 7. [2] Joel iii. 16, 12.

Mount of Offence, bare and yellow, about a hundred feet lower: Bethany itself lies 400 feet lower than the top of the Mount of Olives, but our Lord no doubt, as a rule, when on foot, took the path which still goes over the summit, and is used habitually by the peasants from its being much shorter than the circuit taken by us as more easy for riding.

Passing the saddle between the Mount of Olives and the Mount of Offence, a small but delightful valley opened out on the lower side, adorned with fig, almond, and olive trees, the road continuing comparatively broad, though here and there roughly cut out of the slopes of rock.

As we neared Bethany, which is about two miles from Jerusalem by the winding road we had taken, the ground sank very slowly on the right, with outcrops of the flat limestone beds, showing themselves like steps amidst the thin grass, on which goats and sheep were feeding. Turning aside in search of rock tombs, I was greatly affected by finding several, a short way from the road, at just such a distance from Bethany as seemed to suit the Gospel account of the tomb of Lazarus. They were simply chambers, entered by going down two or three steps to a small level space before the face of the rock, which has been hewn perpendicularly, and then hollowed out to receive the dead. Entering the largest, which was the size of a very small low room, I found it thick with maidenhair fern; but the stone had long ago disappeared from the door, and there was no sign of burial. Indeed, if it were the tomb of Lazarus there would be no such sign. That it, or one of the others around, was that in which the brother of Martha and Mary had lain, appeared very probable, since there seemed to be no others between them and Bethany. The tomb,

moreover, was outside the village,[1] and it was on the Jerusalem side of it,[2] Jesus having travelled by way of the Holy City, which would lie in His route in coming from the north. It may well be, therefore, that I stood on the very ground made sacred by His footsteps, and that this was the very spot that heard the words, "Lazarus! come forth!" Here, it may be, Martha and Mary, and the friends and neighbours who had come to console them, had seen the eyes and cheeks of the Holy One wet with tears of love for His friend, and of grief over the reign of sin and death in so fair a world.

Bethany, "the house of poverty," or as it is now called, El Azariyeh, a corruption from "Lazarus,"[3] lies on one of the eastern spurs of the Mount of Olives. Its New Testament name may have risen from its being on the borders of the Wilderness of Judæa, though it is itself surrounded by gardens and orchards on a small scale; or, with more probability, from its having been a place frequented by lepers, who were popularly called "the poor;" the case of Simon the leper, who lived here, showing that it was a refuge for his unfortunate class,[4] who were permitted by the rabbis to live in open villages like Bethany, though they could not remain within the gates of walled towns or cities.[5] Some have thought the word means "house of dates," but, as it seems to me, on insufficient grounds, for the root from which this derivation is sought means, at best, only "unripe dates,"[6] and the palm is as unfruitful at Bethany as in other parts of the hill country of Judæa. Over the highest part of the village rise the

[1] John xi. 30—31. [2] John xi. 18—20.
[3] The "L" has been taken as an article by the Arabs.
[4] Mark xiv. 3. [5] Delitzsch, *Durch Krankheit*, p. 60.
[6] Buxtorff's *Lex.*, p. 38.

fragments of a tower built by the famous Queen Millicent, wife of Fulke, fourth king of Jerusalem, to protect a cloister of black nuns which she founded in Bethany in A.D. 1138, beside the then existing church of St. Lazarus. The village consists now of about forty flat-roofed mud hovels, unspeakably wretched in their squalor, and the population is exclusively Mahommedan. The children, half naked, and miserably dirty, ran about us begging. There is excellent water, which enables the poor creatures to grow numerous fig, olive, almond, and carob trees, in little orchards enclosed within loose walls, built of the stones cleared off the soil within, and running up and across the stony slope. Naturally, a "tomb of Lazarus" is shown, to which one descends by no fewer than twenty-six steps, only to find a poor chamber, which is very unlike a Jewish tomb. A church was built over the spot as early as the fifth century. The so-called site of the house of Martha and Mary is also pointed out; but as their home has been assigned to many different places at different times, no value whatever is to be set upon the claim. Nothing certain, in fact, is known, except that our Lord must have gone to and from Jericho by way of this village.

In this sequestered spot, on the edge of the wilderness, our Saviour spent many peaceful hours. Surrounded and tended by deep and faithful love, He often refreshed Himself here, after His weary and disturbing conflicts with the pettiness and bigotry of the orthodox theologians of His people in Jerusalem. At home in the bosom of one of its families, and well known in the hamlets around, He could send His disciples before Him, without pre-intimation, to ask for the use of the ass on which He was about to ride into the city.[1] Hither He came, every

[1] Matt. xxi. 2.

night, in the last week of His life, till He was betrayed, taking the footpath, one may suppose, over the top of Olivet, rather than the camel road round its south slope, by which I had ridden. He had no such true friends in Jerusalem as those on this spot. Bethany remains for ever sacred as the home of tender ideal friendship, realised in that of Martha and Mary for our Lord. One could linger, even amidst its present misery, to drink in the landscape around, on which the eyes of the Redeemer must so often have rested,—the blossoming trees round the huts; the green hollow, near at hand, below; the reddish-brown slopes of the Mount of Olives behind, and, on the south-east, as one looks over a large tract of olive-trees below, the table-land of the Moab hills, pink and grey, beyond the Dead Sea; the rough, barren, brown waste of slopes and peaks of the wilderness of Judæa; the flat-topped cone of the Frank Mountain, and the pink hills of Quarantania, far down in the depression towards Jericho.

Up from that depth of nearly 3,000 feet below Bethany joyous multitudes of Galilean pilgrims, journeying to the Feast, came, and accompanied the Saviour on His last ascent to Jerusalem. Joy filled all hearts but His, for not only was the Passover at hand, but as Galileans they were proud of "Jesus the prophet," from their own Galilean town of Nazareth, and were ready to hail Him as the long-expected Messiah. On His side, it was becoming that now, on the eve of His self-sacrifice, He should solemnly assume the headship of the new kingdom of God, soon to be founded by His atoning death, and by a formal act, clearly understood when men came to reflect, claim the mysterious dignity of the Christ, or Anointed, of God. From Bethany, therefore, with its heights of wild uplands over it and the long ridge of Olivet shutting out the troubles of the tumultuous city

on its western side, He set forth, on the opening morning of His Passion Week, after resting the night before in the peaceful cottage of His friends. The road He took was undoubtedly that by which I had come; the creature He rode, an ass, the symbol of early Jewish royalty, and then even more the usual creature for riding than now, though it is still used by all ranks. "Two streams of people met as He advanced.[1] The one poured out from the city, and as they came through the gardens, whose clusters of palms rose on the south-eastern corner of Olivet, they cut down the long branches, as was their wont at the Feast of Tabernacles, and moved upwards towards Bethany, with loud shouts of welcome. From Bethany streamed forth the crowds who had assembled there on the previous night, and who came testifying to the great event at the sepulchre of Lazarus.[2] The road soon loses sight of Bethany. It is now a rough but still broad and well-defined mountain track, winding over rock and loose stones; a steep declivity below, on the left; the sloping shoulder of Olivet above it, on the right; fig-trees, below and above, here and there growing out of the rocky soil. Along the road the multitudes threw down the branches which they cut as they went along, or spread out a rude matting, formed of the palm branches they had already cut as they came out. The larger portion—those, perhaps, who escorted Him from Bethany—unwrapped their loose cloaks from their shoulders, and stretched them along the rough path, to form a momentary carpet as He approached.[3] The two streams met midway. Half of the vast mass, turning round, preceded; the other half followed.[4] Gradually, the long procession swept up

[1] I quote the exquisite description of Dean Stanley in *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 187.

[2] John xii. 7. [3] Matt. xxi. 8. [4] Mark xi. 8.

and over the ridge, where first begins 'the descent of the Mount of Olives' towards Jerusalem. At this point the first view is caught of the south-eastern corner of the city. The Temple and the more northern portions are hid by the slope of Olivet on the right; what is seen is only Mount Zion, now, for the most part, a rough field, crowned with the Mosque of David, and the angle of the western walls, but then covered with houses to its base, surmounted by the Castle of Herod, on the supposed site of the Palace of David, from which that portion of Jerusalem, emphatically 'The City of David,' derived its name. It was at this precise point, 'as He drew near, at the descent of the Mount of Olives'[1] (may it not have been from the sight thus opening upon them?) that the shout of triumph burst forth from the multitude, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the Kingdom that cometh of our father David. Hosanna—peace—glory in the highest.'[2] There was a pause, as the shout rang through the long defile; and as the Pharisees who stood by in the crowd complained,[3] He pointed to the stones which, strewn beneath their feet, would immediately 'cry out' if 'these held their peace.'

"Again the procession advanced. The road descends a slight declivity, and the glimpse of the city is again withdrawn behind the intervening ridge of Olivet. A few moments, and the path mounts again, it climbs a rugged ascent, it reaches a ledge of smooth rock, and, in an instant, the whole city bursts into view. As now the Mosque of El Aksa rises, like a ghost, from the earth, before the traveller stands on the ledge, so then must have risen

[1] Luke xix. 37.
[2] Matt. xxi. 9; Mark xi. 9; John xii. 13; Luke xix. 37.
[3] Luke xix. 39.

the Temple tower; as now the vast enclosure of the Mussulman sanctuary, so then must have spread the Temple courts; as now the grey city on its broken hills, so then the magnificent city, with its background—long since vanished away — of gardens and suburbs on the western plateau behind. Immediately below was the valley of the Kedron, here seen in its greatest depth, as it joins the Valley of Hinnom, and thus giving full effect to the great peculiarity of Jerusalem, seen only on its eastern side—its situation as of a city rising out of a deep abyss. It is hardly possible to doubt that this rise and turn of the road—this rocky ledge—was the exact point where the multitude paused again, and He, when He beheld the city, wept over it."

CHAPTER XXVII.

STILL ROUND JERUSALEM.

As I returned from Bethany I left the mountain road at this point and guided my beast down the steep bridle path that leads to the village of Siloam, reaching the valley at the north end of it, after a descent in some parts steep and unpleasant. The position of the Potters' Gate, to which Jeremiah "went down" from his house on Mount Zion,[1] and saw "the vessel marred in the hand of the potter," and where, after this, he bought a potter's earthen bottle, has been thought by some to have been over against Siloam, the water of which was favourable to the trades of potters, tanners, and fullers, and has attracted them to this spot in almost all ages. In our version, the gate is called the "eastern," but it ought to be "the potsherd" or "Potters' Gate." There appears, however, to have once been a gate at the south-west of the city, near the Sultan's Pool, and it is striking to find that the heaps of rubbish in that part, below the walls, consist largely of fragments of very ancient pottery, as if thrown out in early ages at the gate where the potters had their works.

It is very interesting to watch the art of these clever craftsmen in any of the citiesof the East. I have stood beside them in Asia Minor, in Cairo, and in different

[1] Jer. xviii. 2; xix. 1.

towns of Palestine, and have never wearied of noticing the illustrations of Scripture metaphors and language they unconsciously supplied. Nothing could be more rude than their workshops: indeed, no stable in England is half so wretched as some of them. A coarse wooden bench, behind which the potter sits at his wheel—a thick disc of wood, from the centre of which stands up an axle, surmounted by another small disc; both turning horizontally when the lower one is put into swift revolution by the foot. On the upper wooden circle he throws down from a heap lying on his bench a lump of clay duly softened beforehand; the circle is made to spin round; he shapes the clay into a low sugarloaf cone with both hands, makes a hole in the top of the whirling mass with his thumb, and opens it till he can put his left hand inside; sprinkles it, as needed, with water, from a vessel beside him; a small piece of wood in his right hand smoothing the outside as it turns, while the other hand smooths and shapes the inside: both hands assisting to give whatever shape is desired to the whole. One is reminded of the words of Jeremiah, as he looks on, "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as the potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hands, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel."[1] Often, from some defect in the lump, or from some misadventure, there is a failure: the clay has been made too thin, or there is some other fault. The vessel is then abruptly marred, by squeezing the mass together again into a cone; and beginning afresh, the potter makes it, perhaps, into something quite different. So it was in the case of the prophet. "The vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it."[2] It is to this that Isaiah also

[1] Jer. xviii. 6. [2] Jer. xviii. 4.

refers, when he asks, "Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?"[1] So, also, St. Paul demands, "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"[2]

The pottery of the East, as I have before remarked, is amazingly brittle, even when the vessel is large and seems strong. None of it is now glazed, for the art of glazing appears to be lost among Eastern potters, and this may increase its fragility. No one who has speculated in delicate cups or bottles, or small jars of red or black clay, at any great pottery centre in Syria or Palestine, can have failed to realise how readily it goes to pieces. I have before remarked that a momentary forgetfulness in putting it down too quickly, frequently causes "the pitcher to be broken at the fountain,"[3] so that the poor peasant girl who came to draw water has to go disconsolate home, without her supply. There is much greater force, therefore, in Isaiah's words than there would be if Eastern pottery were as strong as ours, when he threatens Judah that God "shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces: He shall not spare, so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit."[4] Even the largest jar is broken into pieces by a comparatively slight blow, and hence, when destruction is intentional, the ruin is very complete. The image of the Psalmist is thus very terrible when he says that the Lord will "dash his enemies in pieces like a potter's vessel."[5] Wherever an Oriental turns, he can

[1] Isa. xlv. 9; xxix. 16. [2] Rom. ix. 20, 21. [3] Eccles. xii. 6.
[4] Isa. xxx. 14. [5] Ps. ii. 9.

realise this as we cannot. The ground about ancient Memphis, as I have said, is largely composed of bits of pottery, and the quantity round some of the ruined cities of Bashan is equally wonderful. It might be raked out in heaps from many of the mounds, in different parts of the country, on which towns or villages formerly stood. Wherever deep excavations are made round any city, the wreck of its past is found to consist, in great part, of broken pottery. Still, when accident has caused the breaking of a large vessel, there are naturally some fragments comparatively large, and these are still of some use. A hollow piece serves as a cup in which to lift water from the spring, either to drink or to fill a jar. But Judah is to be destroyed so utterly that it will be like the wreck of a potter's vessel, of which no sherd is left for this humble use. Nothing is more common, moreover, than for neighbours to borrow a few lighted coals in a hollow potsherd from each other, to kindle their fire, or for a poor man to come, in the evening, to the baker's oven with his lowly fire-pan and get from it a few glowing embers, to boil his tin of coffee, or heat his simple food. But Judah would perish so completely that it would be like the shivered atoms of a vessel no piece of which could "take fire from the hearth." Jeremiah's symbolical acts, however, gain still another illustration from Eastern habits. He was commanded "to go forth into the Valley of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the Potters' Gate," and break the bottle in the sight of the men that went with him, and say, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again."[1] The unchanging East would understand this to-day as vividly as in the time of the prophet, for it is still the custom to

[1] Jer. xix. 2, 10, 11.

dash down a piece of pottery when one desires to show the ruin he wishes to overtake the object of his fierce anger. Running up to him, he hurls it to the ground, as a scenic imprecation of like ruin on him and his.

The ride up the slope of Moriah, over the hundred feet of rubbish under which the natural rock is buried, is by a bridle path, in places uncomfortably steep, but you get to the top at last, near the south-east corner of the Temple area. Riding slowly along to St. Stephen's Gate, one is greatly impressed by the size of the stones and the strength of the wall. It is from ten to fifteen feet thick, and about forty feet high at this place, though, at others, where the rock is high, it is only twenty-five feet above it. This eastern side is especially venerable; rows of immense stones, beautifully cut and set, running along a short distance above the ground, and, of course, for a great depth below it. The effect of the walls altogether, as they now stand, is very picturesque. To form a conception of the appearance of Jerusalem, seen from without, one has to imagine a circuit of nearly two and a half miles of fortifications, yellow with age, and looking stronger, perhaps, than in a military sense they really are; their outline broken by salient angles and square towers, surmounted by battlements and pierced with loopholes.

North of the city are some grand old tombs, which interested me greatly. The most famous of these, known popularly as the Tombs of the Kings, lie about half a mile straight north from the Damascus Gate, past the great northern olive-grove, a few yards east of the road to Nablus, the ancient Shechem. The rocks in the valley leading to them are full of ordinary sepulchres. A slope, thirty-two feet wide, cut in the solid rock, leads down eighteen feet to a great court, also hewn out of the rock to the size of more than ninety feet long and nearly

ninety feet broad.[1] Originally, the floor of this great excavation must have been considerably lower, as there is a deep bed of rubbish over it. The sides are perpendicular, and hewn smooth. Before reaching the incline, however, to enter this great open hall, as I may call it, you go down a flight of broad, high steps, cut in the rock, and pass across a large, square ante-chamber, between which and the great hall below, the rock has been left four and a half feet thick, to serve as a wall, where not cut away to allow of the incline. As you turn to the west, the portico of the tombs faces you—a chamber thirty-nine feet long, seventeen wide, and fifteen high, with a richly ornamented front, once adorned with four pillars, two of which are gone, while the other two are broken down. The rock above is beautifully sculptured in the later Roman style, with wreaths, fruit, and foliage, which extend quite across the whole breadth of nearly thirty feet, and hang down the sides. The entrance to the tombs is on the south side of this portico, and was intensely interesting from the fact that beside the entrance stood a great round stone, which was intended to be rolled forward, as a door, to close it; such a stone as might have been "rolled away from the door of the sepulchre."[2] Lighting candles and going inside, we found that one chamber led to another—four in all, each branching off into numerous tombs, so that there is space, in the whole, for a large number of burials; the excavations extending about seventy-five feet from north to south, and fifty from east to west, all in the depth of the hill and independent of the great outer courts. Mr. Fergusson[3] thinks that this wonderful mausoleum was that of Herod the Great, contrary to the generally accepted belief that he was buried at the Frank

[1] 92⅔ by 87, Robinson's measurement. [2] Mark xvi. 3.
[3] *Dict. of the Bible*: art. "Tombs."

Mountain; but it seems more probable that it is the tomb of Queen Helena of Adiabene, which, according to Josephus, was situated here. Having embraced Judaism in her own country, a province of what had been the original kingdom of Assyria, she came to Jerusalem in A.D. 48, with her son Izates, after the death of her husband. Ultimately returning home, her body was brought back to Jerusalem for burial. The fact that Izates had twenty-four sons perhaps accounts for the extent of the tomb.

About a mile to the north-west of this wonderful burial-place are the traditional Tombs of the Judges, the true history of which is quite unknown: the name having been given, apparently, from the fact that the number of receptacles for bodies corresponds roughly with the reputed number of those composing the so-called Great Synagogue, which is said to have consisted of seventy members, though its ever having existed at all is now called in question. The tombs have at least an historical value, besides being interesting in themselves, as showing the wealth and prosperity of Jerusalem before it finally rose against Rome. As in the tomb of Helena, there is a portico in front of them, but the ornamentation is quite different. From this porch a door opens into a chamber about twenty feet long and eight high, cut in the rock; its sides hewn into receptacles for the dead, one over the other, while side openings lead to other chambers, the walls of which are hollowed into narrow, deep recesses, into which bodies could be thrust, with the feet pointing, from all sides, to the central open space. There are three entrances, all from the west, to three different tombs, which, in all, provide places for about sixty corpses.

Another striking tomb lies in the rocks east of the Nablus road, some distance from the Tombs of the

Judges, which, by the way, are called by the Jews "The Tomb of the Seventy," for the reason mentioned in the previous paragraph. This other tomb is held in still greater honour as the traditional resting-place of Simon the Just, one of the most famous successors of Ezra, and high priest for forty years; a greatly venerated Jewish worthy, whose praise is the subject of a beautiful passage of Jesus the son of Sirach: "Simon, the high priest, the son of Onias, in his life fortified the house of the Lord, and in his days repaired the Temple. By him was the foundation wall of the Temple raised to double its former height, and the lofty rampart of the wall restored round it. In his days the cistern was hewn out, which in its size was like the brazen sea. He cared for the people, to keep them from calamity, and fortified the city with a wall.

"How gloriously did he shine forth when the people were round him, when he came forth from behind the curtain of the Holy of Holies! He was like the morning star shining through the clouds; like the moon at the full! As the sun shines back from the Temple of the Most High, as the glorious rainbow shines between the showers! As the blooming rose in the days of spring, as lilies beside the springs of water, as the branches of the frankincense-tree in the days of summer, as glowing incense in the censer, as a vessel of beaten gold, set with all manner of precious stones, as a fair olive-tree budding forth fruit, and as a cypress-tree growing up even to the clouds!"[1]

The tomb is cut into the rock, but a wall has been built in recent times across the entrance to the porch, an iron door, however, with a small barred window at the side of it, giving access. The front of the tomb is carefully

[1] Ecclus. l. 1-10. The English version is amended in this quotation.

whitewashed, just as, in old times, the sepulchres were "whited,"[1] to prevent passers-by coming near them and being defiled. Anyone who was thus rendered unclean had to remain so for seven days, and had to go through a tedious and expensive purification, while, if it happened as he was going up to a feast, it disqualified him from taking part in it.[2] Nor was this all: to refuse to purify oneself was followed by being "cut off from Israel." The Jews with their children visit this reputed tomb of Simon on the thirty-third day after the Passover—a day sacred to his memory, and when inside, light wicks which float in a basin of oil, in honour of him. Charity is dispensed by them on this occasion in a strange way. Many cut or shave off part of their hair and of that of their children, or even the whole of it, and give away as much silver as the hair weighs! The origin of this strange custom I do not know, but it is always connected with a vow. Like everything Jewish, it is very ancient, since Paul is mentioned as "having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had made a vow;"[3] and the four men in Jerusalem mentioned in the Acts as having a vow were required, as part of it, to shave their heads.[4] Perhaps the practice arose from some association with the vow of the Nazarites, who were required to shave their heads if they came near a dead body.[5] This would account for the usage in those who visit the tomb of Simon, but, of course, it does not explain it in the cases quoted in the Acts.

Lying 2,500 feet above the sea, Jerusalem has a climate in some respects very different from what might be expected so far to the south, but characteristic, more or less, of the whole of the ancient territory of Israel

[1] Matt. xxiii. 27. [2] Num. xix. 11. [3] Acts xviii. 18.
[4] Acts xxi. 23, 24. [5] Num. vi. 6, 9, 18.

west of the Jordan, from the fact that it, too, lay high above the sea-level.

Rain is mentioned in the Old Testament more than ninety times, but incidental notices show that the seasons in their vicissitudes of moisture and dryness have been the same in all ages. It is still as rare as in the days of Samuel that there should be thunder and rain in the wheat harvest, and the occurrence would be as disturbing to the minds of the peasants now as when the great prophet foretold it.[1] It would, moreover, be as appalling a calamity in our day as it was in that of Ahab, that there should be no dew nor rain during three years and a half.[2] Great storms of wind and rain, like that through which Elijah ran before the chariot of the king to Jezreel,[3] still burst on the land in the rainy season, and those who have then to be abroad may sometimes be seen, in their cotton clothes, "trembling for the great rain" like the people gathered to hear the law in the days of Ezra.[4]

One half of the year, in Palestine, is well-nigh cloudless sunshine; the other half is more or less rainy; the result of observations continued for twenty-two years[5] showing that the average number of days on which rain falls in the moist season is 188; exactly, one may say, half of the 365 days of the whole year. In some years, however, wet days may be comparatively few, while in others there may be even a hundred more than this minimum. It does not rain every day for any length of time, in any part of the year, intervals of fine weather occurring, with rare exceptions, after a day or two of moisture. Whole weeks, indeed, may pass without a shower at the time when rains are most expected, and

[1] 1 Sam. xii. 18.
[2] 1 Kings xvii. 1; James v. 17.
[3] 1 Kings xviii. 45, 46.
[4] Ezra x. 9.
[5] *Pal. Explor. Fund Report*, 1883, p. 8 ff.

these bright days or weeks, in winter and early spring, are among the most delightful in the year. There are, nevertheless, continuous periods of rain, but they seldom last more than seven or eight days, though in rare cases it rains and snows for thirteen or fourteen days together. The rainy season, as I have had occasion to say elsewhere, divides itself into three stages: first, the early rain, which moistens the land after the heat of summer, and fits it for ploughing and sowing; then, the abundant winter rains, which soak the ground, fill the pools and cisterns, and replenish the springs; and last of all, the latter, or spring rain, which swells the growing ears, and pours a supply of moisture down to their roots, enabling them to withstand the dry heat of summer. Between each of these rains, however, there is a bright and joyful interval, often of considerable length, so that in some years one may travel over all the land in February or March without suspecting that the latter rains have yet to fall.

Snow covers the streets of Jerusalem two winters in three, but it generally comes in small quantities, and soon disappears. Yet there are sometimes very snowy winters. That of 1879, for example, left behind it seventeen inches of snow, even where there was no drift, and the strange spectacle of snow lying unmelted for two or three weeks was seen in the hollows on the hillsides. Thousands of years have wrought no change in this aspect of the winter months, for Benaiah, one of David's mighty men, "slew a lion in the midst of a pit, in the time of snow;"[1] and it is noted in Proverbs as one of the virtues of the good wife that "she is not afraid of the snow."[2]

The time of the beginning of the autumn or winter rains is very uncertain, October, in some years, being more

[1] 2 Sam. xxiii. 20. [2] Prov. xxxi. 21.

or less rainy, while in others no rain falls till November. The time of the cessation of the spring or "latter" rains is equally doubtful: yarying, in different seasons, from the end of April to the end of May. There is sometimes, moreover, an interval of several weeks, occasionally as many as five, between the first rains of October and the heavy winter rains in December; a passing shower or two in the long succession of bright days alone asserting the rights of the season. So, also, the latter rains sometimes virtually end in the middle of April, with perhaps only three or four rainy days for a month or more afterwards, when the last grateful spring shower makes way for the waterless months of summer. The harvest, of course, depends entirely on the rainfall; but, while too little moisture is fatal, too much is almost as hurtful. The peasant looks forward with most confidence to abundant crops when plentiful winter showers fall on a large number of days, without any long break of fine weather, and when there is a copious fall of rain in spring.

The lowest temperature noticed in Jerusalem during twenty-one years was on the 20th of January, 1864, when the mercury sank seven degrees below freezing, but it occasionally reaches the freezing point in February and October also, and once it did so even in April. You may count on five or six frosty nights in the course of a winter, but the sun melts the thin ice before noon, except in places out of its reach, though on the open hills the temperature must necessarily be lower than in the city. The heat of a brazier is hence often very agreeable during the months in which, after the heat of a Palestine summer, the register thus drops once and again to the verge of freezing, and for days together the air is most disagreeably cold. It was in such biting weather that Jehoiakim sat in the winter house—that part of the Palace of David

on Zion which faced south—in the ninth, or cold month, Kislew (corresponding nearly to our December), glad of the heat of a charcoal fire in a brazier in the middle of the chamber, the windows of which, it must be remembered, had no glass—when he cut up the roll of Jeremiah's prophecy with the scribe's knife, and burnt it.[1] It was in this cold month, also, that the people sat trembling for cold in the great rain, when gathered at the summons of Ezra;[2] and it was in the next or tenth month—our January—that Esther was first brought before King Ahasuerus, both of them, no doubt, arrayed in the richest winter costume of Persia.[3]

The wind plays a great part in the comfort of the population in Palestine, and in the returns of the soil, for the north wind is cold, the south warm, the east dry, and the west moist. Winds, lighter or stronger, from some point of the north seem to be the most common, for they blow, perhaps only in a zephyr, on almost half the days of the year:[4] creating the cold in winter, but in summer bringing chills which are much dreaded by the lightly dressed natives, especially those of the maritime plain, as producing sore throats, fevers, and dysenteries. "Cold cometh out of the north;"[5] but so does "fair weather,"[6] for "the north wind driveth away rain:"[7] a characteristic recognised in its native name, "the heavenly," apparently from the glorious blue sky which marks it.

A few calm days in summer, with no wind, is sufficient to make the heat very unpleasant in Jerusalem. The air becomes dry, and almost as destitute of ozone as a

[1] Jer. xxxvi. 22, 23.
[2] Ezra x. 9.
[3] Esther ii. 16.
[4] 182 days.
[5] Job xxxvii. 9.
[6] Job xxxvii. 22.
[7] Prov. xxv. 23.

sirocco. A delightful mitigation of this state of things is usually found, however, in a strong west wind from the sea, blowing over the city in the afternoon. The Hebrews distinguished winds only as blowing from the four cardinal points, and hence when we read, "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south, and blow upon my garden,"[1] the north-west or south-west wind is meant, since it rarely blows directly from the north or the south. This wind, from some point of the west, is felt at Joppa as early as nine or ten in the morning, but, as becomes the East, it travels leisurely, reaching Jerusalem, generally, only about two or three in the afternoon; sometimes, indeed, not till much later. Subsiding after sunset, it soon rises again, and continues for most of the night, bathing and renewing the parched face of nature with the refreshing vapours it has brought from the ocean, and constituting "the dew" of the sacred writings. Should it not reach the hills, as sometimes happens, Jerusalem suffers greatly, but near the sea its moist coolness is a daily visitor. When the weather is very hot on the hills, and this relief fails, the languor and oppression become almost insupportable.

Easterly winds are common all round the year, but are especially frequent in the latter half of May and of October, and most unusual in summer. Dry, stimulating, and very agreeable, during the cold months, if not too strong, they are dreaded in the hot months from their suffocating heat and dryness, and from the haze and sand which at times come with them. In the summer they are known as the sirocco,[2] which, when intense, is a veritable calamity. It dries the throat, bringing on catarrh and bronchial affections; while its lack of ozone makes one unwilling to work with either mind or body; it

[1] Cant. iv. 16. [2] Lit. "south-east wind."

creates violent headache and oppression of the chest, causes general restlessness and depression of spirits, sleepless nights or bad dreams, thirst, quickened pulse, burning heat in the palms of the hands and soles of the feet, and sometimes even fever. Such effects are vividly painted in the story of Jonah, whose spirit this overpowering wind so utterly broke for the time that he thought it better to die than to live.[1] Man and beast alike feel weak and sick while it blows. Furniture dries and cracks, paper curls up, vegetation withers. Though it is usually gentle, it at times comes in fierce storms, laden with the fine sand of the eastern or south-eastern desert and waterless regions over which it has passed; blinding and paining those who encounter it, and raising the temperature to over 100° Fahrenheit, so that it burns the skin like the dry air of an oven. I myself have felt it painfully oppressive, although I never had to endure its more severe effects. In a violent sirocco the sky is veiled in yellow obscurity, through which the sun, shorn of its beams, looks like a smoking ball of fire, while dancing pillars of sand raised by whirlwinds, and looking from afar like pillars of smoke, often mark it, and threaten at times to overwhelm both man and beast. The terrible imagery of the prophet Joel presents these phenomena heightened to suit the great crisis he foretells, for the heavens in such a storm seem to show "blood and fire and pillars of smoke."[2] How the east wind dries up the springs and fountains; how it withers the flowers, and turns the tinder-like leaves to dust, so that they disappear; how it destroys the bloom of nature as with a fiery stream, and takes away the hope of harvest when it sweeps over a field before the time of ripening; how it scorches the vineyard, and shrivels the grape in the cluster; and how, after it has passed away,

[1] Jonah iv. 8. [2] Joel ii. 30; Acts ii. 19.

the dew and rain, at times, refresh and revivify the thirsty earth, is painted by the Hebrew poets and prophets with the force of personal observation.[1]

In this storm-wind of the desert, Israel beheld an illustration of the awful power of Jehovah, and thought of it as the very "breath" of His anger. Its swift and utter withering of grass and flowers, so that they disappear before it like the stubble it burns up,[3] is constantly used by the sacred writers to illustrate the sudden disappearance of man from his wonted place, when he dies. Recognising in the sirocco the most irresistible force of the air in motion, the Israelite, moreover, gave the name to any violent wind, from whatever quarter. Thus, speaking of the great ships which of old made a port of Eziongeber, at the head of the gulf of Akaba,[4] the Psalmist says, "Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind"[5]—though the storms that wreck shipping there come from the north. In the same way, the wind which blows back the Red Sea at Suez is from the north, but is called an east or sirocco wind in Exodus.[6] It is striking to notice, from the various metaphorical uses of the phenomena of this terrible wind, how closely the sacred writers watched nature, and studied its moral analogies. In Job passionate violence of speech is compared to a man filled with the east wind.[7] Ephraim is said to "feed on wind and follow after the east wind,"[8] in reference to the lying and deceit of her relations with Egypt and Assyria; seeking advantages from them which, on the one hand, would be empty as the wind, and,

[1] Gen. xli. 6—23; Ps. ciii. 16; Job xxvii. 21; Isa. xl. 7; xxvii. 8; Ezek. xvii. 10; xix. 12; Hos. xiii. 15; Ecclus. xliii. 21.
[2] Isa. xl. 7; Hos. xiii. 15.
[3] Isa. xl. 7; Ps. ciii. 16; Job xxi. 18; Jer. xiii. 24.
[4] 1 Kings xxii. 48, 49.
[5] Ps. xlviii. 7.
[6] Ex. xiv. 21.
[7] Job xv. 2.
[8] Hos. xii. 1.

on the other, would be as impossible to secure as it would be to follow and overtake the swiftly passing gusts of the sirocco.

As I have said, the east wind is rare in summer, seldom blowing more than two or three days in a month, but it is much more frequent in winter, and then, strangely, brings with it cold so penetrating that the thinly dressed natives sometimes die from its effects. It is frequent also in spring, shrivelling up the young vegetation if it be long continued, and thus destroying the hope of a good year. No wonder the people of Lebanon call it "the poison wind." It has, indeed, become the proverbial name for whatever is hateful or disagreeable. If a calamity befall one, he will say the east wind blows on him. The corn on the threshing-floor, though ready for winnowing, must lie under whatever protection can be heaped over it, till the east wind ceases. The north wind is too violent for threshing, and the east wind comes in gusts, which, as the people of the Haurân say, "carry away both corn and straw." The whirlwinds which sometimes accompany a sirocco seem to rise from the encounter of the east wind with an air-current from the west, and often scatter the grain lying in summer on the threshing-floor or in the swathe, unless it be kept down by stones. How violent they may be is shown by an extract given by Wetzstein from an Arab chronicle:—"On the third Adar rose a storm-wind which broke down and uprooted trees, tore down dwellings, and did incalculable damage. It blew from the east, and lasted about fifteen hours."[1] Such a "great wind from the wilderness smote the four corners of the house" in which Job's family were gathered, when it fell upon all within.[2]

October, November, and nearly the whole of December,

[1] Delitzsch, *Iob*, 351. [2] Job i. 19.

are very mild and agreeable in Palestine, and any rain falling in these months revives the soil, after the scorching of the summer heat, and refreshes man and beast, creating, in fact, a temporary spring. The weather begins to be unpleasant about the end of December, but the winter, with its cold, storms, rain, and snow, only commences in January, continuing, with fine days interspersed, till February, when bright weather becomes more frequent, and sometimes lasts for weeks. About the end of the month, however, a second winter begins, with heavy rains, the cold and stormy days and nights being keenly felt by the population, since their houses give little protection against such an evil. For old people, especially, this after-winter is particularly dangerous, the rough weather that has preceded having already lessened their powers of resistance. It lasts, generally, about a week, from the 25th of February to the 3rd of March, and this interval is called in Syria and Palestine "the death-days of old folks." It closes the season in which the over-ripe fruit is shaken from the tree of life, a time lasting in all, one may say, from thirty-five to forty days. During these, the almond-tree blossoms, and the grasshopper creeps out, thus apparently giving us the correct translation of the words in our version, "The almond-tree shall flourish and the grasshopper shall be a burden."[1] The blossoming of the almond, however, may not only be taken as marking the days most fatal to old age, but as itself a beautiful emblem of the end of life, for the white flowers completely cover the tree, at the foot of which they presently fall like a shower of snow.

[1] Eccles. xii. 5. Wetzstein gives multiplied proofs of the time at which the almond blossoms and the grasshopper appears: Delitzsch's *Koheleth*, p. 446.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PLAIN OF JERICHO.

THE road to Jericho goes past Bethany, beyond which the ground rises into a new height. This surmounted, a steep descent leads to a deep valley shut in by hills. A well with a small basin, in which leeches are abundant, stands at the side of the track; the only one between Bethany and the Jordan Valley. Very probably this was the "Spring of the Sun," En Shemesh, mentioned as one of the boundaries of Judah,[1] and it may once have been a stirring spot, from the excellence of the water, and its being necessarily a halting place for all travellers, to quench their thirst. From this point the road stretches on for a considerable distance over level ground, between high hills, absolutely desolate, and with no sign of human habitation anywhere. The slopes are covered with thorny bushes and beds of stones, fallen from above. The silence of death reigns on all sides. Yet even in this desolate and wretched tract small flocks of sheep and goats find, here and there, scanty pasture on the hill-sides. Gnarled and stunted trees occasionally dot the plain. Was it through this barren tract that the grey-haired David rode, when fleeing to the Jordan, from Absalom? It must have been either through this or some parallel valley north of it, and one can easily fancy how Shimei

[1] Josh. xv. 7.

could run along the top of the hills, at the side, and hurl stones down the steep at the fugitive king and his attendants, mingling with his violence showers of curses: "'Out with you, out with you, thou bloody man, thou man of Belial; the Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned."[1] Somewhere here, also, lay the village of Bahurim, where the king's spies were so dexterously hidden in the empty cistern.[2] A small valley on the right, and a low hill on the track, lay between us and the Valley of the Sidr-tree—the *Spina Christi*—where lie the ruins of the old Hathrur Khan. These may not themselves be ancient, but it is quite probable that there may have been a khan here in olden times for the benefit of travellers. There are now only some tumble-down buildings, quite uninhabited. The whole region is painfully desolate, and the water in the cisterns, from the surface and from rain, is bad, but the position is a three hours' journey from Jerusalem, and thus half way to Jericho, so that a shelter for wayfarers may well have stood here in all ages. The road from the Jordan to the capital was a very busy one in the days of our Lord, since the Jews from Galilee usually took this road to the Holy City. The khan to which the good Samaritan guided the wounded Jew may very possibly, therefore, have stood on this spot. There is seldom a caretaker of caravanserais in desolate places in the East, but some offer this advantage, as did the one on this road in the time of Christ, which had a "host," who could even be trusted with the care of the sick.[3] It is touching to think that our Lord must Himself often have rested for the mid-day hour at the Khan Hathrur, on His journeys to and from Jerusalem; above all, that He rested here for the last time when on His way to the

[1] 2 Sam. xvi. 3, 7. [2] 2 Sam. xvii. 19. See also Vol. I., p. 557.
[3] Luke x. 35.

Holy City, on the Friday before His death. What thoughts must have filled His soul, as He thus paused to revive wearied nature, before beginning the last three hours' journey towards Calvary!

The road from this point was for a time tolerably level, but its framework of wild, desolate hills, ever more bare and stony, grew increasingly repulsive in its gloom and sternness. At one part, the road climbed forward by a narrow path hewn in the rock, and the view, till close to the plains of the Jordan, was simply that of a dark mountain gorge. At times, the track led along the edge of sheer precipices; at others, down rocks so steep and rough that it needed every care to prevent a fall. Yet, as a whole, it is not perhaps worse than the camel track from Joppa to Jerusalem.

The last spur of the mountains was, however, after a while, left behind, and then the scene changed in a moment; a magnificent view over the plains of the Jordan lying at our feet, and the mountains surrounding them, bursting on the sight. The Wady Kelt had surfeited us with its gloomy horrors, and made the open landscape so much the more charming. Through the deep clefts past which we had ridden, a winter torrent foams wildly in its season, though there is no water in its bed in summer. This gully has been supposed to be identical with that of the brook Cherith of Elijah.[1] But the words used respecting that famous torrent—the name of which means "the cutter into" (the hills)—preclude this idea, for it is said that Elijah was to go from Samaria, where he was, eastward, and hide himself in the brook Cherith; the expression[2] translated "brook" in our version being that used elsewhere for the streams in the deep gorges of the Amon and Jabbok, and for wadys or valleys worn by rain-

[1] 1 Kings xvii. [2] Nahal.

floods. Yet it is impossible to determine from the Hebrew text whether it lay "towards" the Jordan, or "east" of it, though the latter is the more probable sense; and if this be accepted, the Wady Ajlûn, on the other side of the river, almost exactly east of Samaria, appears to have special claims, as its lower course is still called Fakarith, which sounds very like Cherith, or, to write the name more in accordance with the Hebrew—Crith.

The whole of Wady Kelt is singularly wild and romantic, for it is simply a deep rent in the mountains, scarcely twenty yards across at the bottom, filled with tall canes and beds of rushes, to which you look down over high perpendicular walls of rock. Its cliffs are full of caves of ancient hermits; and the ruins of the small Monastery of St. John nestle beneath a lofty dark precipice on its north side. At this place, a fine aqueduct, leading off the waters of a great spring, crosses the wady by what has been a splendid bridge seventy feet high, and runs on for three miles and three-quarters to the opening of the Jericho plain. White chalk hills rise in the wildest shapes on each side, forming strange peaks, sharp rough sierras, and fanciful pyramid-like cones; the whole seamed in all directions by deep torrent beds. Not a tree is to be seen on the bare slopes. Nor is the end of the pass less striking, for it is guarded, as it were, by two tall sloping peaks of white chalk, with each of which special traditions and legends are connected.

Looking away from the gloomy gorge beneath, and the forbidding hills on each side, the view of the Jordan plains was very pleasant. Their apparently level surface stretched for miles north and south, dry and barren, but amidst the uninviting yellow, treeless waste, there rose, immediately in front, a delightful oasis of the richest green. The banks of the Jordan are fringed, for the most part,

with beds of tall reeds, oleanders, and other luxuriant growths, and only here and there is a rift in the verdure to be seen. It was this green border to which Jeremiah gave the name of the "glory" of Jordan, mistranslated "swelling" in our version.[1] The attack of the assailants from Edom, and afterwards of those from Babylon, is painted by the prophet—a native of Anathoth, in the tribe of Benjamin, near Jerusalem—with the graphic force of one who knew the locality, as like that of the lion "forsaking his covert,"[2] and "coming up from his thicket," —the jungle which was the "glory" of Jordan, against the perennial pastures[3] of the hills; where the flocks awaited his hunger. On the east of the plains were the Moabite hills, cut into numberless ravines and clefts; and at the southern end of the oasis rose a tower, for the protection of a hamlet whose wretched earth-roofed huts were hard to recognise in the distance.

The last part of the way was very steep and tiresome, though occasional traces showed that it had been the road to Jerusalem for thousands of years. At this part water flowed down the dark gorge of the Wady Kelt, apparently in a permanent stream. Two ruined castle-like buildings stood at the sides of the way, perhaps marking the sites of the ancient castles of Thrax and Tauros, which once defended the pass, and of the towers of the later times of the Khalifs, or of the Christian kings of Jerusalem, when the plains of the Jordan, under their protection, enjoyed a rich and varied prosperity. We were now in the "circle" of the Jordan, known as the "ghor," or hollow, nearly four hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean, so that we had descended nearly three thousand

[1] Jer. xii. 5; xlix. 19; l. 44. Translated "pride" in R.V.
[2] Jer. iv. 7; xxv. 38.
[3] Translated "permanent pastures" in R.V.

feet since leaving Jerusalem. We were still, however, nearly seven miles, in a straight line, from the Jordan, which lay more than eight hundred feet still lower down,[1] so that we had a constant slope before us.

About half a mile to the right, and a little farther than that from the mountains we had left, lay what is known as "The Pool of Moses"; an ancient reservoir, 188 yards long and 157 broad, constructed, it may be, by Herôd, in connection with his great palace and gardens at Jericho. If, however, it be not the work of the great Edomite, it at least shows, in the remains of an aqueduct from the hills, by which it was fed, and by its own great size, how perfect the arrangements for the irrigation of the place must have been in antiquity, and fully explains how the desert around us had once been an earthly paradise. Remains of aqueducts, indeed, run across the whole region in all directions, indicating that water was once distributed freely to all parts of it, thus everywhere securing the vital condition of its fertility.

The Sultan's Spring, which is also known as the Spring of Elisha, a mile and a half north of the road from Jerusalem, is the usual place for travellers to pitch their tents; affording in the abundant water and pleasant verdure a much more agreeable site than the dirty modern village of Jericho. Many small brooks flowing from it, and giving life to some patches of grain and dark-green bean-fields, had to be crossed to reach it; the Judæan hills, running along on the left hand, in long broken walls of bare rock, frightfully desolate and barren, and seamed and cut into by deep clefts and ravines, offering a striking contrast to the living forces of nature around. The climate is so hot that when water

[1] Depth at the foot of the hills, 385 feet; at the Jordan, 1,187 to 1,254 feet (*Great Map of Palestine*).

is abundant, as it is here, we have the luxuriance of the tropics. The harvest ripens at this level some weeks earlier than in the hill-valleys, and hence the first-fruits needed for the Temple altar, at the Passover, could be obtained from this plain.[1] At its source, the fountain is full and strong; and it is to rivulets flowing from it and from the still larger Duk Fountain, a mile and a half further north, at the foot of the mountains, that the ground as far as the village on the south owes its strong vegetation, while all the rest of the plain for miles in every direction is utterly barren. Yet Josephus tells us that in his day the whole was "a divine region, covered with beautiful gardens, and groves of palms of different kinds, for seventy stadia north and south, and twenty from east to west; the whole watered by this fountain."[2] It springs from under rocks, and at once forms, at the foot of the hill from which it bursts, a large pool, surrounded by thickets of nubk-thorn or sidr, oleanders, and tall reeds.

The nubk-tree (*Spina Christi*) is found round Jerusalem and in all the warmer parts of Palestine, especially along the sides of the narrow bed of the Jordan, much of which it has converted into an impenetrable thicket. It gets its Latin name from the belief that from it was made the crown of thorns forced on the brow of our Lord; and the flexible twigs, with their tremendous spines, which bend backwards, are assuredly well fitted to make an awful instrument of torture if twisted into a mock diadem. Small round Jerusalem, it becomes a fine tree in hotter places; one or two at the fountains in the plain of the Jordan being especially large. The leaves are bright green and oval, the boughs crooked, the blossom white and small; and it bears, from December to June,

[1] Lev. xxiii. 10. [2] Jos. *Bell. Jud.*, iv. 8, 3.

a yellow fruit, like a very small apple, or, rather, like a gooseberry. This is eaten by the Arabs under the name of "dhom," or jujubes, and is very agreeable, either fresh or dried, especially when mixed with "leben," or sour milk. Fences of the nubk are to be seen round all the grain or bean patches of the Arabs, in the Jordan depression; a few branches laid one on the other, to the height of about a yard, forming a protection through which no animal ventures to break, and soon getting so interlaced by the thorns, that they become virtually one solid whole.

Palestine is, indeed, pre-eminently the land of thorns, the dry heat arresting the development of the leaves in almost all plants, and making them merely the abortive growths which we call spines or prickles. The bramble which was summoned by the trees in Jotham's parable to be their king,[1] seems to have been the rhamnus, a thorny bush found in all parts of the country, and often used for hedges, like our hawthorn, which it somewhat resembles. Another plant, translated in our version "bramble," "thistle," and "thicket,"[2] is different from the rhamnus in Hebrew, but it is not known what is particularly intended by it. It must have been a comparatively weak shrub or plant, however—perhaps a thistle—for the wild beast in Lebanon is said to have passed by and trodden it down. The thistles of Palestine are very numerous, and in some places, for instance on the plain of Esdraelon, threaten, at many spots, to choke the crops. But to quote a text or two in which different thistly or thorny plants of Scripture are named will give a better idea of their number than any mere attempt at describing

[1] Judg. xix. 14.

[2] Isa. xxxiv. 13; 1 Sam. xiii. 6; 2 Kings xiv. 9; Prov. xxvi. 9; Cant. ii. 2.

them singly. "Do men gather figs of thistles?" asks our Lord.[1] In this text we can identify the plant meant, by its name in the Greek Testament—the "tribolos"—from which an iron ball, used in warfare, got its name, spikes protruding from it, like those of the plant, in four directions, so that whichever way it fell, when thrown on to the ground, one spike stood upright, and thus stopped the advance of cavalry. The centaurea, or star thistle, is exactly like this, and is sadly abundant in the fields and open ground of Northern Palestine, forming barriers through which neither man nor beast can force a path. "The way of the slothful man is a hedge of thorns," says Proverbs,[2] using a word which refers, it is thought, to a class of plants the name of one of which at least, the miscalled "apple of Sodom,"[3] is well known in poetry, and as a proverbial expression for anything which promises fair but utterly disappoints on trial. This plant, which is really a kind of potato, grows everywhere in the warmer parts of Palestine, rising to a widely branching shrub from three to five feet high; the wood thickly set with spines; the flower like that of the potato, and the fruit, which is larger than a potato apple, perfectly round, and changing from yellow to bright red as it ripens. That it is filled with ashes is merely a fable; its seeds are black, like those of a potato. Still another kind of thorn is mentioned as that with which Gideon proposed "to tear the flesh" of the men of Succoth, who refused to help him against the Midianites.[4] But it is needless to show at greater length what every traveller in the Holy Land knows only too well—that wherever you turn, "brambles," "briers," "thorns," "thistles," and "pricks" of all kinds abound.[5]

[1] Matt. vii. 16. [2] Prov. xv. 19. [3] See *post*, p. 117. [4] Judg. viii. 7, 16.
[5] Six Hebrew words are translated "briers;" two, "brambles;" twelve,

The Sultan's Spring is the only one in the plain of Jericho, except that at Duk, and hence it was very probably the scene of the miracle of Elisha, when he cast salt into the water and cured its previous bitterness.[1] Separated into many rills, it now serves, as I have said, to water the patches of maize, millet, indigo, wheat, barley, or beans, grown by the Arabs. The waters of the still more copious Duk Fountain are brought along the base of the Judæan hills, to the top of the slope behind the Sultan's Spring, from which point they were formerly distributed to several mills and used for irrigating the upper part of the plain; an aqueduct carrying them over a gully towards the south. The mills, however, are all gone, except the ruins of one for grinding sugar-cane, which still look down from the steep side of the hill.

The top of the mound above the Sultan's Spring commands a fine view over the plain, which needs only water and industry to become again one of the most fruitful spots in the world. The ever-flowing waters of the two fountains spread rich fertility for several miles in every direction, but almost all this verdure is nothing more than useless shrubs and bushes. Nature is ready, but man is idle and neglectful. Desolation reigns when the water ceases to moisten the soil; and when it rains the showers feed only worthless rankness. Once, however, it was very different. When our Saviour journeyed through these parts, groves of palms covered the plain far and near. The Bible, indeed, calls Jericho "the city of palm trees;"[2] and Josephus speaks of those graceful trees as growing to a large size, and as very numerous, even along the banks

"thorns;" two, "thistles;" and one, "pricks;" most of them being rendered by more than one of these English words.

[1] 2 Kings ii. 19—22. [2] Deut. xxxiv. 3; Judg. i. 16.

of the Jordan.[1] Cotton also was grown here as early as the days of Joshua,[2] if Thenius be right, though that is doubtful. Jericho, moreover, was famous for its honey; and its balsam was a highly prized article of commerce. So valuable, indeed, were the groves from which the latter was made, that Herod farmed them from Cleopatra, when they had been handed over to her as a present by Mark Antony; Arabia and the plain of Jericho being transferred together to her, as if they had been a trifle for such a mistress! The tree from which henna is obtained—the dye still used by the women of the East to stain their nails—also grew here. The Son of Sirach makes Wisdom say that she is lofty as the palm trees of Engedi, and like the roses of Jericho.[3] Sycamores formed alleys alongside the roads, as they now do in the suburbs of Cairo.[4] Even yet, the zukkum, a small, thorny tree, yields from the minute kernels of its nuts an oil which is highly prized by the Arabs and pilgrims, as a cure for wounds and bruises.

The few feeble and lazy inhabitants of the plain trouble themselves little with the cultivation of the soil. Fig-trees grow luxuriantly and need little care, but any large fields of grain there may be are sown and reaped by strangers; peasants who come down from the hills for the purpose receiving half the produce for their own share, and paying the other half to the villagers and the Government, for rent of the land, and taxes. A few patches of tobacco, cucumbers, or millet seemed all the local population could stir themselves to raise. Yet maize is said to be here a biennial plant, yielding two crops from the same roots. Cotton flourishes well, but is rarely planted; and indigo, though very little grown now, was raised freely so long ago as

[1] Jos.: *Ant.*, iv. 6, 1; xiv. 4, 1; xv. 4, 2; *Bell. Jud.*, i. 6, 6; iv. 8, 2, 3.
[2] Josh. ii. 6. [3] Ecclus. xxiv. 14. [4] Luke xix. 4.

the twelfth century, in the time of the Crusades; while the sugar-cane was not only cultivated widely round Jericho in those days, but grew over large tracts on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, from Tripolis to Tyre. Sugar was then unknown in Europe, but the Crusaders, naturally liking the sweet juice and other products of the cane, adopted the word zuccara, which is now our word "sugar." The Saracens, in fact, in the centuries before the Crusades, had introduced the growth and manufacture of sugar on a large scale, and it was they, apparently, who built at least some of the large aqueducts round Jericho, for irrigation, and raised the sugar mills of which the remains are still seen on the slope above the Sultan's Spring.

From the time we reached the level of the Mediterranean, in descending from Jerusalem, a notable change had been visible in the flora around, all the plants being new and strange; and the same change was noticeable in the fauna. Almost every creature has the tawny colour of the soil; the only exceptions being a few parti-coloured birds, and the beetles. The desert sand-partridge takes the place of its more strongly marked counterpart of the hills; the hare is tamed down to the prevailing russet, and the foxes, larks, and, indeed, all forms of animal life, are of a light brown colour. The very foliage, and most of the blossoms, are brownish-yellow or yellowish-white.

The Sultan's Spring has a special interest, since it marks the site of the Jericho of our Lord's day. It bursts out, in a volume of clear and delightful water, from the shingle at the foot of a great mound, under which lie the remains of part of the once famous city. A large fig-tree shades the pool, which has a temperature of 84° Fahrenheit, and swarms with fish. The hill above is simply the rubbish of old houses, temples, and palaces, full of bits of pottery and glass. The ruins of a small Roman shrine still rise

behind the Spring, like part of an old enclosing wall; and fragments of pillars and capitals lie around. From this point Jericho stretched away to the south and north, tapping, by aqueducts, the great Duk Fountain, to which the water of a third, far off in the uplands, was brought in conduits. As the town lay close to the hills, it is easy to see how the spies of Joshua could have escaped up the hollow of the ravine leading to the Duk Fountain, and thence to the hills,[1] though there may not have been the same wild cover of jungle and corn-brake to hide them that there is now. Of ancient Jericho we know nothing, except that it was a walled city, with gates shut at sundown,[2] and houses on the line of the town walls, over which some of the windows projected.[3] It could not, however, have been a very large place, since the Hebrew ark was carried round it seven times in one day.[4] Finally, it stood on rising ground, for when the walls fell, the assailants had to "ascend" to the town. Like other Eastern cities, it had numbers of oxen, sheep, and asses within the walls;[5] and the population, in its different grades, had not only the pottery common to all ages, but vessels of brass, iron, silver, and gold.[6] Notwithstanding the curse denounced on anyone who rebuilt it, it soon rose from its ashes; the prohibition appearing only to have been against its being restored as a fortified place, for it was assigned by Joshua himself to the tribe of Benjamin[7]—certainly not to lie a heap of ruins. Hence we find it flourishing in the time of the Judges, under Eglon, the King of Moab,[8] and it was still prosperous in the time of David, who ordered his ambassadors to stay in it after they had been outraged by the Ammonites.[9] The curse of Joshua was fulfilled, for the first time in

[1] Josh. ii. 22.
[2] Josh. ii. 5.
[3] Josh. ii. 15.
[4] Josh. vi. 4.
[5] Josh. vi. 21.
[6] Josh. vi. 24.
[7] Josh. xviii. 21.
[8] Judg. iii. 12, 13.
[9] 2 Sam. x. 5.

the reign of Ahab, when Hiel of Bethel fortified the city.[1] It was here that poor Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, was seized in his flight by the Chaldæans, to be taken to Riblah and blinded by Nebuchadnezzar.[2] After the return from Babylon a new settlement was begun by 345 men, no doubt with their families—children or descendants of captives taken from Jericho;[3] but they did not attempt to fortify it, for this was first done by the Syrian general Bacchides in the Maccabæan wars.[4] Herod the Great, in his earlier career, assaulted and sacked it, but at a later time, when he had bought it from Cleopatra,[5] he lavished wealth on its defences and embellishment. To command it, he built the fortress Kypros on the height behind, erected different palaces which he called after various friends, and built a great circus for horse-racing and heathen games.[6] It was at Jericho that this splendid but unfortunate and bad man ended his life, in terrible agony, passing away with a command, worthy of his worse nature, that his sister Salome, as soon as he was dead, should massacre all the chief men of the Jews, whom he had previously summoned to Jericho and shut up in the circus. He would make his death to be lamented by the people in some way, he said —for their own sakes if not for his. Salome was prudent enough, however, to leave the savage injunction unfulfilled. The great palace in which Herod had so often resided was burnt down a few years after his death, in one of the fanatical risings of the population, led by a fancied Messiah, but Archelaus restored it with more than its former splendour.

It was to this city that our Lord came, when He was

[1] 1 Kings xvi. 34.
[2] 2 Kings xxv. 7; Jer. xxxix. 7; lii. 11.
[3] Ezra ii. 34; Neh. vii. 36; iii. 2.
[4] 1 Macc. ix. 50.
[5] See p. 76.
[6] Jos. *Ant.*, xvi. 5, 2; 6, 5.

received by Zacchæus, and healed the blind man.[1] The branches of one of the sycamores lining the road, easily reached from their bending horizontally near the ground, had formed a look-out from which the publican could see over the heads of the crowd, and from this he was called to escort Christ to his house.

Very different from this city of palaces is its present successor Eriha, one of the foulest and most wretched villages of Palestine. Rude walls of stone, often dilapidated, with roofs of earth heaped on layers of reeds, maize stalks, or brushwood; no windows; one room for all purposes; the wreck of old huts breaking the rude line of those still inhabited,—these are the features of modern Jericho. The four walls of the hovels are mere loosely piled stones, taken from ancient ruins, and stand quite irregularly, with great gaps between them, each having a yard fenced with the thorny boughs of the nubk.[2] Open sheds, with roofs like the hovels themselves, held up by poles bent at every angle, provide a shelter by night for the sheep and goats, which make them unspeakably filthy. A stronger hedge, of the same impenetrable thorns, surrounds the whole village; for what purpose it is hard to say, as they would be poor indeed who sought plunder in such a place. The few bits of cultivated ground near the huts seem mainly given to tobacco and cucumbers, for no provisions of any kind were to be had, except some wheat. They had not even lentils. As if to point the contrast with the past, a solitary palm-tree rose from amidst the squalor. The villagers bear a very bad character, especially the women, who are worthy, for morals, of their ancestors of Sodom and Gomorrah, once the cities of this very plain. There are about sixty families in Eriha.

The wheat harvest here is ripe early in May, three

[1] Luke xviii. 35; xix. 1—7; Matt. xx. 29; Mark x. 46. [2] See p. 72.

weeks after the barley harvest, while the cornfields at Hebron and Carmel are still green; and it is reaped, as I have said, by bands of peasants from the hills, who also sow the grain. There is no need of its lying in the field to dry, for the sun is so hot that the sheaves can be carried at once to the threshing-floor, on camels, or on small asses, which look like mounds of moving grain beneath great loads that well-nigh hide them. The earth on a round spot about fifty feet across has already been trodden and beaten hard, as a threshing-floor. On this the grain is thrown, and trodden out by oxen or cows, which are often driven round it five abreast. No sledges are used on the plains of the Jordan, the feet of the animals sufficing to tread out the corn and break the straw into "teben"; the whole contents of the floor being frequently turned over by a long wooden fork with two prongs, to bring all, in turn, to the top. When trodden enough, it is winnowed by being thrown against the wind with the fork which is alluded to by the Baptist, when he says of the coming Messiah that "His fan is in His hand, and He will throughly cleanse His threshing-floor."[1] The waste in this primitive husbandry is very great, much of the corn falling from the backs of the asses or camels, much getting trodden into the cracks of the ground, and not a little of the straw, with all the chaff, flying off before the wind. Elsewhere, the process varies in some features, though everywhere the same in its leading characteristics. The oxen or cows used to tread out the grain are still unmuzzled on the plains of the Jordan,[2] especially among the Mahommedans. Some Christians, I regret to say, are not so humane. Our co-religionists, as a whole, have not, indeed, a very high reputation in the East, as may be judged from a story told me by the steamship

[1] Matt. iii. 12. [2] Deut. xxv. 4.

captain on my first trip up the Mediterranean many years ago. Wishing to land some goods at a spot on the Red Sea, where there was no provision for putting them under lock and key, he hesitated to leave them on the naked shore. "You don't need to fear," said a turbaned functionary: "there is not a Christian within fifty miles!"

Between the fountain and the village there is a wady in which a streamlet flows through a thicket of nubk and other trees, entering, at last, the court of the old tower which looks down on the huts, and filling its reservoir. Some large fig-trees rise here and there, and the *Palma Christi*, from which castor oil is extracted, is common, rising in this locality into a large perennial tree, from the moist heat of the climate. A great block of red Egyptian granite, from Assouan, lay at one spot, partly buried; the fragment of a stone which had been from eight to ten feet long. It must have been landed at Acre or Tyre, and brought down the side of the Jordan channel, from the north—but when, or by whom?

The heat of the Jordan plains is very great in summer, and oppressive even in spring, while in autumn it becomes very unhealthy for strangers. In May, the thermometer ranges from about 86° in the early forenoon to over 100° in the beginning of afternoon, standing, even in the shade, at over 90°. The delight of sitting under one's own vine and fig-tree in such a land can be imagined.

A band of Turkish soldiers, encamped near the village to keep the wandering Arabs in awe, enlivened the landscape by their moving life. As the sun sank in the west, long shadows lay on the plain, while the hills beyond the river were dyed in the richest purple. North of the village and fountain, the mountains of Judæa stretched, north and south, in a huge arc, contrasted with which the

Moabite hills seemed a straight line. The bold, picturesque form of Jebel Quarantania, the mountain of the Forty Days' Temptation,[1] rose a mile behind the Sultan's Spring, more marked than any other. Numerous hermits made themselves cells in the steep sides of this height in the early Christian centuries, and a church once stood on its barren top, but the whole region has been forsaken by man for ages. Now that Easter was approaching, the plains, however, were for a time alive with visitors. The trumpets of the Turks blew unmelodious signals. Horsemen moved hither and thither. Natives were busy pitching tents for some travellers. Bedouins were kindling a fire of thorns. Bands of pilgrims set up their tents, lighted blazing fires, and amused themselves by firing off guns, listening to gossip, or making sport—for they were of all ages. Oxen, horses, sheep, and goats fed as they could, around. Yet beyond the immediate neighbourhood, and especially to the south, stretched out a dismal wilderness. When night fell, the stars shone out with a lustre peculiar to such regions, but sleep, when found, was not any the sounder for the yelping and barking of the village dogs and the screams of the jackals. The Bedouins lay down round their fire in their thick "abbas," for without such a protection the night is dangerous. It was the same in Bible times, as we learn from the kindly words of the old Mosaic law: "If thy debtor be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge: in any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own upper garment and bless thee."[2] It is surprising how men can sleep without injury in the open air, as the natives very often do, for the dew, or, rather, sea-moisture, frequently falls so heavily as to soak the canvas

[1] Matt. iv. 1. [2] Deut. xxiv. 12, 13.

of tents like rain. Perhaps their safety lies in the fact that Orientals always cover the head in sleeping. I have frequently seen such copious moisture on everything, in the early morning, that one can readily picture to himself how the Beloved, in Canticles, wandering through the night, could say, "My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night."[1]

The ride from Eriha to the Jordan is about five miles over a stony plain, which swells, at intervals, into flat mounds of salt marl, on which there is no vegetation. Year by year the winter-rains sweep down the slope, and wash away a layer of the wide surface, carrying it to the Jordan, there being little to check them but copses of the zukkum tree and *Spina Christi*. Yet seven monasteries once stood on this now desolate tract; three of them still to be identified by their ruins. Till we reach the edge of the Jordan, only the stunted bushes I have mentioned, unworthy of the name of trees, and a few shrubs with dwarfed leaves, are to be seen after leaving the moisture of the Sultan's Spring. Not a blade of grass softens the dull yellow prospect around, and yet the whole region needs only water to make it blossom like a garden. The track ran along the last miles of the Wady Kelt as it stretches on to the Jordan—a broad watercourse, strewn with waterworn boulders and shingles, with banks twenty to thirty feet high, and from fifty to a hundred yards apart, fringed with straggling, stunted, thorny bushes, kept in life by the evaporation from what water may flow in the torrent bed below during the year, and boasting in one spot a solitary cluster of palm-trees. The way led to the site of the ancient Beth-Hogla—"the home of partridges"—which belonged to Benjamin, and marked the division between its territory and that of Judah.[2] Names

[1] Cant. v. 2. [2] Josh. xv. 6; xviii. 19, 21.

cling to localities with strange tenaciousness in the East, and that of Beth-Hogla still remains in the modern Arabic form of Ain Hajlah—the Fountain of Hoglah. This spring, the water of which is reputed the finest in the whole "ghor," bubbles up in a clear pool, almost tepid, enclosed by an old wall about five feet round and only a little above the ground; the sparkling stream flowing over it, and carrying life wherever it goes. A grove of willows skirts it for a good distance in its course; but, after all, this is only a spot of verdure in the wide desolation. Offering the means of gaining rich harvests far and wide, the fountain is, nevertheless, utterly unused by man; the birds and wild creatures alone frequent it. That the plain to the west, which lies higher, was once richly fertile, is certain, but it might be difficult to realise how this was possible, did we not find the wreck of an aqueduct which stretched all the way from the Sultan's Spring to Ain Hoglah. Nearly two miles from this "living water" there was till lately a ruin called Kusr Hajlah—the House or Tower of Hoglah—the remains of one of the monasteries, once filled by fugitives from the busy world. Some figures of Greek saints, some patches of fresco, and some inscriptions, used to be visible on its roofless and crumbling walls; but in 1882 these ancient remains were destroyed, to make room for a new monastery. How long ago it is since the first matins and evensong rose from this spot no one can tell, but it seems probable that they were heard in these solitudes fifteen hundred years ago; and from that remote day till about the time of our Henry the Eighth, monks of the order of St. Basil offered a refuge here to the pilgrims who visited the banks of the Jordan.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE JORDAN.

THE first sight of the Jordan, rushing swiftly on its way, fills the heart with uncontrollable emotion. Sometimes, for a short distance, straight, it continually bends into new courses which hinder a lengthened view, yet add to the picturesque effect. On both sides, it is deeply bordered by rich vegetation. Stretches of reeds, ten or twelve feet high, shaken in the wind,[1] as such slender shafts well may be, alternate with little woods of tamarisks, acacias, oleanders, pistachios, and other trees, in which "the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, and sing among the branches."[2] Nightingales, bulbuls, and countless turtle doves, find here a delightful shade and abundant food. But though a paradise for birds, these thickets hide the view of the river, except from some high point on the upper bank, till vegetation ceases two or three miles from the Dead Sea. As it runs through the open plain, the stream has at different times had many banks, which rise above each other in terraces. Its waters once washed the foot of the mountains behind Jericho, 630 feet above the Dead Sea, as shown by the mud terrace and gravel deposits they threw down on the lower slopes of these hills when they rolled past them in a stream nearly sixteen miles wide. A second terrace of gravel,

[1] Matt. xi. 7; Luke vii. 24. [2] Ps. civ. 12.

520 feet above the Dead Sea, stretches from the Sultan's Spring, for several miles, towards the Jordan. In this plateau, freshwater shells of the river and its tributary streams are found bedded in layers of silt. At about a mile from the present banks there is a third terrace of white marl crusted with salt, a little over two hundred feet above the Dead Sea, and to this succeeds a fourth, which is liable, though rarely, to floods, and forms the alluvial plain bordering the river. At its upper end this bank has a height of ninety feet above the Dead Sea, but it gradually sinks to the level of the surrounding flat as the river approaches its mouth.[1] The surface is covered with thin herbage and scattered shrubs, and runs like a bluff close to the bank of the river. Descending its steep face to a depth of over fifty feet, we are in the midst of the bird-paradise of tamarisks, acacias, silver poplars, willows, terebinths, and other trees of which I have spoken; a dense undergrowth of reeds and plants fond of moisture filling up the intervals between the higher vegetation. This, I may repeat, is the "swelling" or "glory" of the Jordan; once the haunt of the lion, and still of the leopard, traces of which are constantly to be seen, especially on the eastern side. Wild swine, also, swarm in this jungle, which is pierced in every direction by their runs. Below this narrow belt of green, the Jordan rushes on, twisting from side to side in its crooked channel; its waters, generally not more than fifty yards across, discoloured by the earth they have received from their banks, or from tributaries, and in most places too deep to ford. When the stream is low, inner banks are visible, about five or six feet high, but when it is in flood, the waters sweep up to the terrace above, driving out the wild beasts in terror for their lives.

[1] Prof. Hull's *Mount Seir*, &c., 162.

It was during this inundation that the Israelites crossed, under Joshua. The time of their passage was four days before the Passover,[1] which has always been held during the full April moon, and then, as now, the harvest was ripe in the Jordan valley from April to early in May; the ripening of barley preceding that of wheat by two or three weeks. Then also, as now, there was a slight annual rise of the waters from the melting of the snows in Lebanon, and from the spring rains, so that the river flowed "with full banks"[2] when the Hebrews came to it. It cannot, however, rise above the sunken terrace on which its border of jungle grows, and thus, since the waters shrank to their present level, can never have flooded the upper plain, as the Nile does Egypt. But even within the limits of its present rise, a great stream pours along, in wheeling eddies, when the flood is at its height; so great, that the bravery of the lion-faced men of Gad, who ventured to swim across it when thus full, to join David, has been thought worthy of notice in the sacred records.[3] How stupendous, then, the miracle by which Israel went over dry-shod![4]

Somewhere near the mouth of the Jordan, perhaps at the ford two miles above it, John the Baptist drew to his preaching vast multitudes from every part of the country, including not only Judæa, but even distant Galilee; our blessed Lord among others. For it was here that, at His baptism, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended upon Him, "and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son."[5] But though John may have baptised at the ford, it is a mistake to suppose that the Israelites crossed at this point, for the words are, "The

[1] Josh. iv. 19; v. 10.
[2] Josh. iii. 15; 1 Chron. xii. 15; Ecclus. xxiv. 26.
[3] 1 Chron. xii. 15. [4] Josh. iii. 17. [5] Matt. iii. 17.

waters that came down from above stood and rose up upon a heap . . . and those that came down toward the sea . . . failed, and were cut off; and the people passed over right against Jericho."[1] Thus, the waters being held back, those below flowed off, and left the channel dry towards the Dead Sea; so that the people, who numbered more than two millions, were not confined to a single point, but could pass over at any part of the empty channel.

From the site of Beth-Hogla to the mouth of the Jordan is a ride of about three miles, the last part of which is over a forbidding grey flat, impregnated with salt, and utterly destitute of living trees, though the bleached trunks and boughs of many, uprooted by floods, stick up from the soft mud. Here and there, indeed, a sandy hillock, rising above the level, gives a home to some desert shrubs, but such a break in the dulness is comparatively rare. The jerboa, a creature doubtless well known to the Israelites, is often seen on these hillocks, which are filled with its burrows—their safe hiding-places on the approach of danger; the least alarm causing them to disappear into them as if by magic, for they leap off to them over the sand with wonderful speed, like miniature kangaroos. Beautiful creatures they are, with their soft, chinchilla-like fur, their great eyes and mouse-like ears; and singular in their structure, with their almost nominal fore-legs, and hind-legs as long as their body, while the tail is still longer. It seems as if, what with the tail and great hind-legs, they flew rather than leaped. Ranked by the Jews among mice, the jerboa was "unclean," and could not be eaten, but the Arabs have no such scruples; though it is only very small game, since its body measures no more than six or seven inches in

[1] Josh. ii. 16.

length. There are, in all, twenty-three species of small rodents in Palestine, and of these not a few contribute to the kitchen comfort of the Bedouins, when caught. One singular mouse, which abounds in the ravines and barrens round the Dead Sea, is exactly like a small porcupine; sharp bristles, like those of a hedgehog, standing out from the upper half of its back, wonderfully long for a creature about the size of our home mouse.

I must not forget to notice another animal that abounds in the gorge of the Kedron, and along the foot of the mountains west of the Dead Sea—the cony of Scripture. It is the size of a rabbit, but belongs to a very different order of animals, being placed by naturalists between the hippopotamus and the rhinoceros. Its soft fur is brownish-grey over the back, with long black hairs rising through this lighter coat, and is almost white on the stomach; the tail is very short. The Jews, who were not scientific, deceived by the motion of its jaws in eating, which is exactly like that of ruminant animals, fancied it chewed the cud, though it "did not divide the hoof," and so they put its flesh amidst that which was forbidden.[1] It lives in companies, and chooses a ready-made cleft in the rocks for its home, so that, though the conies are but "a feeble folk," their refuge in the rocks[2] gives them a security beyond that of stronger creatures. They are, moreover, "exceeding wise," so that it is very hard to capture one. Indeed, they are said, on high authority, to have sentries, regularly placed on the look-out while the rest are feeding; a squeak from the watchman sufficing to send the flock scudding to their holes like rabbits. The cony is found in many parts of Palestine, from Lebanon to the Dead Sea, and in this latter region the Arabs eagerly try to kill it, as choice eating.

[1] Lev. xi. 5; Deut. xiv. 7. [2] Ps. civ. 18; Prov. xxx. 24, 26.

The Jordan was regarded by the Israelites as the glory of their country, for it is the only river in Palestine which always flows in a copious stream, though its sunken, tumultuous, twisted course, which, between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, winds for some 200 miles over a space only about sixty miles in direct length, has made it useless for navigation, or as an attraction to human communities, except at the plain of Jericho. The great miracle when the Hebrews passed over made it sacred to them, so that its waters were already regarded with reverence when Elisha commanded Naaman to wash in them as a cure for his leprosy.[1] Hallowed still more by the preaching of John and the baptism of Christ, the Jordan has been the favourite goal of all pilgrimages to the Holy Land, in every age since the first Christian centuries. As early as the days of Constantine, to be baptised in its waters was deemed a great privilege, while in the sixth century Antoninus relates that marble steps led down into the water on both sides at the spot where it was believed our Lord had been baptised, while a wooden cross rose in the middle of the stream. Upon the eve of the Epiphany, he adds, "great vigils are held here, a vast crowd of people is collected, and after the cock has crowed for the fourth or fifth time, matins begin. Then, as the day commences to dawn, the deacons begin the holy mysteries, and celebrate them in the open air; the priest descends into the river, and all who are to be baptised go to him." Holy water was even in that early age carried away by masters of vessels who visited it as pilgrims, to sprinkle their ships before a voyage; and we are told that all pilgrims alike went into the water wearing a linen garment, which they sacredly preserved as a winding sheet to be wrapped round them at their death.[2] The scene of the yearly bathing

[1] 2 Kings v. 6 ff. [2] *Antoninus*, Pal. Explor. Fund ed., p. 11.

of pilgrims now is near the ford, about two miles above the Dead Sea, each sect having its own particular spot, which it fondly believes to be exactly that at which our Saviour was baptised.

The season of baptism has been changed from the colder time of Epiphany to that of Easter, and as the date of the latter feast differs in the Roman and Greek Churches, no collisions take place. Each Easter Monday thousands of pilgrims start, in a great caravan, from Jerusalem, under the protection of the Turkish Government; a white flag and loud music going before them, while Turkish soldiers, with the green standard of the prophet, close the long procession. On the Greek Easter Monday the same spectacle is repeated, four or five thousand pilgrims joining in this second caravan. Formerly, the numbers going to Jordan each year were much greater, from fifteen to twenty thousand visiting it even fifty years ago.[1] The streets of Jerusalem are, for the time, deserted, to see the vast cavalcade set out; women in long white dresses and veils, men in flowing robes and turbans, covering the space outside the walls and the slopes and hollow of the Valley of Jehoshaphat in a parti-coloured crowd, eager to see the start. At last the procession streams from the gate and pours along the camel-track, towards Bethany and the Jordan; some on foot; others on horseback, or on asses, mules, or camels. Some companies travel with tents and provisions, to make everything comfortable on the journey. Here, a woman on horseback, with a child on each arm, is to be seen; there, in a pannier on one side of a mule, is a woman, in another on the opposite side is a man; or a dromedary, with a great frame across its hump, bears a family with all their coverlets and utensils. The Russian pilgrims, men,

[1] Stephen, *Incidents*, 2, 228.

women, and priests, if it be the Greek Easter, are afoot in heavy boots, fur caps, and clothing more fitted for Archangel than for the Jordan valley. Midway comes a body of Turkish horse, with drawn swords, clearing the way for the governor; then pilgrims again. Drawn from every land, they have travelled thousands of miles, in the belief that to see the holy places and to bathe in the Jordan will tell on their eternal happiness.

In these wonderful gatherings there are as many women as men. The Turkish soldiers are not merely ornamental, or a compliment to Christianity, but an indispensable protection from the robbers or thieves who have frequented the road since long before the story of the good Samaritan, and from the Bedouin at the Jordan itself. The broad space between the Sultan's Spring and Eriha is soon an extemporised town, tents of all sizes rising as by magic, while at night the plain is lighted up by the flames of countless fires. Next morning they start from this resting-place before sunrise, and march or ride by the light of the Passover moon towards the brink of the Jordan, but the pace of such a confused throng is slow. To help them on the first stages of their way, multitudinous torches blaze in the van, and huge watch-fires, kindled at the sides of the road, guard them past the worst places, till, as daylight breaks, the first of the throng reach the sacred river. Before long, the high bank, above the trees and reeds, is crowded with horses, mules, asses, and camels, in terrible confusion; old, young, men, women, and children, of many nationalities, all pressing together, in seemingly inextricable disorder. Yet they manage to clear themselves after a time, and then, dismounting, rush into the water with the most business-like quiet; too earnest and practical to express much emotion. Some strip themselves naked, but most

of them plunge in clad in a white gown, which is to serve hereafter as a shroud, consecrated by its present use. Families bathe together, the father immersing the infant and his other children, that they may not need to make the pilgrimage in later life. Most of them keep near the shore, but some strike out boldly into the current; some choose one spot, some another, for their bath. In little more than two hours the banks are once more deserted, the pilgrims remounting their motley army of beasts with the same grave quiet as they had shown on leaving them for a time; and before noon they are back again at their encampment. They now sleep till the middle of the night, when, roused by the kettledrums of the Turks, they once more, by the light of the moon, torches, and bonfires, turn their faces to the steep pass up to Jerusalem, in such silence that they might all be gone without waking you, if you slept near them. It was thus with a great caravan of pilgrims who encamped a few yards from my tent near the Lake of Galilee. Noisy enough by night, with firing of pistols and guns, they struck their tents and moved off in the morning without breaking my sleep.

The ancient Gilgal, where the Israelites erected a circle of twelve stones, to commemorate the passage of the Jordan, and where they renewed the rite of circumcision,[1] has been rediscovered, of late years, by a German traveller,[2] whose ear fortunately caught from the lips of the Arabs the words Tell Jiljal and Birket Jiljalia; the former a mound over the ancient town, and the latter its pond. They lie about three miles south-east of the Sultan's Spring, close to the track leading to the Ford of the Jordan, and a little more than a mile nearly east from Eriha, but beyond the verdure which surrounds it. The

[1] Josh. iv. 19, 20; v. 2.

[2] Zschotte, Rector of the Austrian Hospice at Jerusalem, 1865.

pool is of stone, without mortar, about forty yards in diameter, and within a mile of it are about a dozen mounds, three or four feet high, which may be the remains of the fortified camp of the Israelites. Ancient Canaanitish houses were very probably built of mud, and would disappear very soon, if deserted; and it is perhaps on account of this that so few vestiges are now to be found of either Gilgal or Jericho. Captain Conder supposes that the twelve stones set up by Joshua were something like a Druidical circle; a kind of rude sanctuary, of the form of the numerous rings of huge stones still found in Moab, and more or less in many countries, over a great part of the world. It may have been so, but one can hardly believe that all traces of it would have perished, had it been thus a miniature Stonehenge.

There are several "Gilgals" in the Bible, but this, on the plain of the Jordan, was the most important. It was doubtless from it that the "angel," or, rather, "messenger," of Jehovah came *up*, from the sunken "ghor," to Bochim, in the hill-country, to rebuke the people, in the early days of the Judges, for their relations to the heathen inhabitants, and for their heathenism.[1] Gilgal must thus, even then, it would seem, have been a religious centre, from which priests could be sent on spiritual errands to other parts of the land. It was to this Gilgal, also, that the representatives of the tribe of Judah came, to invite David to return to Jerusalem, after the death of Absalom;[2] such a venerable sanctuary appearing the best place for a solemn act of kingly restoration. What services were performed at Gilgal, or in what the sanctuary consisted, is not discoverable, unless there be a hint in the twelve stones of Joshua, or in the statement that there were Pesilim "by Gilgal."[3] This word means, in twenty out of the

[1] Judg. ii. 1. [2] 2 Sam. xix. 15. [3] Judg. iii. 19.

twenty-one cases in which it occurs, carved images of idols; and though the Targum translates it in this one instance by "quarries," it very probably does so to save the early Israelites from an imputation of idolatry. If "carved images" be really meant, the inclination of the ancient Hebrews to idolatry must have early shown itself after their first arrival in Palestine. It is not certain, however, that this passage refers to the Gilgal of the Jericho plain; it may allude to another, in the hills of Ephraim.[1] A Gilgal is mentioned "beside the oaks of Moreh,"[2] that is, near Shechem, the present Nablus. From this, or from still another Gilgal, Elijah *went down* to Bethel, and then, farther down, to Jericho, so that it must have been either north of Bethel, or must have lain higher than that place, the Gilgal of the Jordan being excluded in either case.[3] In this third Gilgal there was a community of prophets, for whom Elisha made wholesome the pottage of deadly gourds.[4] It was, however, at the Gilgal in the Jordan plains that Joshua so long had his headquarters, after the taking of Jericho and Ai;[5] that the tabernacle stood before it was transferred to Shiloh;[6] and that Samuel held yearly circuit as a judge,[7] and solemnly inaugurated the kingdom of Saul, and that that unfortunate chief more than once assembled the people around him.[8] And it is this Gilgal which the prophets Hosea and Amos denounced as, along with Bethel, a chief seat of the worship of the calf by the northern kingdom.[9] Besides these three Gilgals, there was a fourth, apparently in the plains of

[1] Judg. iii. 27.
[2] Deut. xi. 30.
[3] 2 Kings ii. 1, 2.
[4] 2 Kings iv. 38.
[5] Josh. ix. 6; x. 6, 15, 43; xiv. 6.
[6] Josh. xviii. 1.
[7] 1 Sam. vii. 16; xi. 15.
[8] 1 Sam. xiii. 4; xv. 12, 21, 33.
[9] Hos. iv. 15; ix. 15; xii. 11; Am. iv. 4; v. 5. From Ramah Samuel *goes down* to Gilgal. So does Saul from Carmel in Judah, but he *goes up* from Gilgal to Gibeah (1 Sam. x. 8; xv. 12, 34).

Sharon;[1] the frequent repetition of the name perhaps implying that in the early ages of Israelitish history, the setting up of stone circles, to which it seems to refer, was a frequent custom with the people. It assuredly was so with their neighbours of Moab, as is still shown by the numerous stone monuments, in circles and other shapes, preserved to our day.[2]

The Jordan, for much the greater part of its course, flows far below the level of the sea; its mouth being about thirteen hundred feet below the Mediterranean. It can never have run into the Gulf of Akabah, at the head of the Red Sea, for the very good reason that the watershed which lies in the way is more than eight hundred feet above the Mediterranean. South of the Dead Sea, the continuation of the Valley of the Jordan is known as the Arabah, that is, the "Waste," or "Steppe;" while the valley through which the river actually flows is known as the "ghor," or "depression." The Jordan formed the eastern boundary of the Promised Land; any territory to the east of it being spoken of as "on the farther side" of the river. Its strange channel, sinking so deep, from step to step, gained it the name of Jordan, or "descender," while its numerous fords, rapids, eddies, sandbanks, and its sharp reefs, past which it often shoots wildly, have in all ages prevented its being used for boats or other vessels. Shut out from cooling winds, the valley is insufferably hot for most of the year, and hence is little inhabited. No town has ever risen on its banks, those near it standing upon heights some distance from it. No road ever ran through its gorges, though many crossed at its fords, but even these were very difficult of approach, from the steepness and roughness of the wadys on either side.

The most noteworthy source of the Jordan, near

[1] Josh. xii. 23. [2] Conder, *Heth and Moab, passim.*

Hasbeya, in Lebanon, is about 2,200 feet above the sea. But it has two others—a spring, as large as a small river, which flows from under a low height at Dan; and a great flow of waters issuing from a cave at the foot of the hills at Banias, or Cæsarea Philippi, a thousand feet above the Mediterranean. These, after rushing swiftly and often tumultuously on their separate courses, unite in the little Lake of Huleh, four miles long, the ancient Sea of Merom, which lies about ninety feet above the ocean. A short distance below Huleh the river is crossed by the ancient but still used "Bridge of the Daughters of Jacob," and is still slightly above the sea-level; but from this point it rapidly sinks. Rushing and foaming through narrow clefts in the rocks, it hurries on to the Lake of Galilee, ten miles and a half from Lake Huleh; entering it through a green, marshy plain, at a level of 682 feet below the Mediterranean. Its course from the Lake southwards is a continued and sometimes rapid descent. In the twenty-six and a half miles from Banias, it has already fallen 1,682 feet, and it has yet to sink 610 feet lower, before it reaches the Dead Sea, sixty-five miles in a straight line from the Sea of Galilee, but three times as far by the bends of the river channel. The total length of the Jordan, from Banias, is thus, in a straight line, only about a hundred and four miles, or one-half the length of the Thames. Inside the deep sunken "ghor," alongside the stream, a terrace runs from forty to 150 feet above the water, and on this alone luxuriant vegetation is found, the land over the "ghor" being very barren. An old Saracen bridge, five or six miles below the Lake of Galilee, marks the spot where probably Naaman crossed when he returned from Samaria to Damascus.[1] The Syrians, under

[1] 2 Kings v. 14.

Benhadad, fled by the same way,[1] and here, too, Judas Maccabæus crossed when returning from Gilead.[2] Very possibly David used the same ford when he invaded Syria,[3] for it is still the road from Jerusalem and Shechem, by way of Beisan, to Gilead and Bashan. Near the mouth of the Jabbok, on the east side of the river, another bridge, built by the Romans, marks the ford where so many Ephraimites were slain by Jephtha;[4] and it was apparently by this bridge that Galilean pilgrims, in the time of Christ, ended the roundabout journey they had made down the east bank of the Jordan, to avoid Samaria; crossing the Jordan to the eastern side a little below the Lake of Galilee, and recrossing here to go on to Jericho, and thence to Jerusalem. Here, also, the Christians must have crossed who fled to Pella at the fall of Jerusalem.

Five or six miles from the river, west of this passage, travellers or fugitives in these old times had the great hill of Surtabeh standing up isolated more than two thousand feet above the Jordan[5] as their landmark; a height famous in the land, for it was from its summit that the appearance of the new moon was flashed by signal fires over the country, till the Samaritans kindled false lights on other hills, so that couriers had to take the place of beacon flames. It is probable that Zarthan, where Solomon had the brazen vessels made for his Temple, lay near Surtabeh, as the soil of this part of the "ghor" is said to be specially fitted for founders' moulds. In the lower stages of the course of the Jordan the mountains on the western side are very rugged and barren, in contrast to those on the eastern, but at the

[1] 2 Kings vii. 15.
[2] 1 Macc. v. 52.
[3] 2 Sam. x. 17.
[4] Judg. xii. 5.
[5] It is 2,368 feet above the Jordan, and 1,244 feet above the Mediterranean.

mouths of the valleys, where the water is low, there are a number of fords used from of old by all who crossed either east or west.

From the foot of Hermon to Lake Huleh, the river descends, in a very short distance, 1,434 feet; thence to the Lake of Galilee it falls 897 feet; and from that Lake to the Dead Sea, 618 feet more; in all, 2,949 feet. At Lake Huleh, the charming open ground is fertile; and there are many green oases in the deep cleft from the Lake of Galilee, southwards; but as a whole the deeply sunken inner banks of the river deserve the name given them by the Hebrews—the Arabah, or Waste. Nor is the wildness relieved by peaceful tributaries on either side, for though several perennial streams join the main current from the east, and many winter torrents rush downwards to it from the west, they pour on both sides through ravines so steep and rugged that it is laborious to reach the level of the stream at any part. The common means of crossing in Bible times seems to have been by fords, though David is said to have been taken over with Barzillai in a ferry boat; but there are many shallow places in the long chasm through which the waters seek their way before reaching the plain of Jericho.

A river so unique may well demand our attention, not only for its strange descent beneath the level of the sea, or for the historical associations of its borders, but also for other features, which supply the key to its past physical history. Between Banias and Huleh the valley is about five miles broad, with steep cliffs on each side, about two thousand feet high, and more or less marshy ground between, the river flowing in the middle of the plain. After leaving Lake Huleh, however, the stream turns to the foot of the eastern hills, running about four miles from the

western range, which towers up, in the neighbourhood of Safed, to more than 3,500 feet above the Lake of Galilee, the bed of which is the first sign of the great chasm in which the river henceforth flows. For thirteen miles south of the Lake, to Beisan, the valley is about four and a half miles wide, some of the cliffs on its western side rising eighteen hundred feet above the stream. In the next twelve miles it is still broader, expanding to a width of six miles, its sides showing a very curious succession of terraces. Beisan, for example, stands on a plateau about three hundred feet below the Mediterranean; the "ghor" itself is four hundred feet lower; while the narrow trench, from a quarter to half a mile broad, in which the river actually flows, is a hundred and fifty feet lower still. This open part of the valley is full of springs, and hence remarkably fertile. After it is passed, the width contracts to two or three miles, with hills rising, on the western side, about five hundred feet above the sea. After running twelve miles through this glen, the stream again has an open course for a time through a valley eight miles broad, till we reach Surtabeh, which rises 2,400 feet above the river, as I have said. From this point to the plain of Jericho, the "ghor" is about ten miles broad, the river flowing, here as elsewhere, in a deeply sunken channel worn out in the valley. Finally, there is the Jericho plain, which the Palestine Survey reports as measuring more than eight miles from north to south, and more than fourteen across, with the Jordan in about the middle. The actual river-bed is, in this section, including its successive terraces, about a mile wide, and two hundred feet, or thereabouts, below the broad valley. It helps to explain the saltness of the Dead Sea to find that from Beisan southwards numbers of salt springs flow into the river.

It would appear from this sketch of the course of the river that a great lake once stretched to the foot of Lebanon, and that after it had begun to dry up, a chain of lakes, filling the broad parts of the valley, for a time took the place of the still larger lake, gradually shrinking, however, till we have only Huleh, the Lake of Galilee, and the Dead Sea, and the dry beds of two other lakes, represented by the plain of Beisan and that of Jericho.

The only boat, so far as is known, that ever descended the whole course of the Jordan, was that of Lieutenant Lynch, of the American Navy, whose description of the "ghor" is necessarily the most complete we possess; his account of the lower part of its course bringing it before us with a vividness only possible to personal observation. "The boats had little need to propel them," says he, "for the current carried us along at the rate of from four to six knots an hour, the river, from its eccentric course, scarcely permitting a correct sketch of its topography to be taken. It curved and twisted north, south, east, and west, turning, in the short space of half an hour, to every quarter of the compass. . . .

"For hours, in their swift descent, the boats floated down in silence, the silence of the wilderness. Here and there were spots of solemn beauty. The numerous birds sang with a music strange and manifold; the willow branches floated from the trees like tresses, and creeping mosses and clambering weeds, with a multitude of white and silvery little flowers, looked out from among them; and the cliff swallow wheeled over the falls, or went at his own wild will, darting through the arched vistas, shadowed and shaped by the meeting foliage on the banks; and, above all, yet attuned to all, was the music of the river, gushing with a sound like that of shawms and cymbals.

"The stream sometimes washed the bases of the sandy hills, and at other times meandered between low banks, generally fringed with trees and fragrant with blossoms. Some points presented views exceedingly picturesque—the mad rushing of a mountain torrent, the song and sight of birds, the overhanging foliage, and glimpses of the mountains, far over the plain, and here and there a gurgling rivulet, pouring its tribute of crystal water into the now muddy Jordan. The western shore was peculiar, from the high limestone hills, . . . while the left, or eastern bank, was low, and fringed with tamarisk and willow, and occasionally a thicket of lofty cane, and tangled masses of shrubs and creeping plants, giving it the character of a jungle. At one place we saw the fresh track of a tiger [leopard] on the low clayey margin, where he had come to drink. At another time, as we passed his lair, a wild boar started with a savage grunt, and dashed into the thicket, but for some moments we traced his pathway by the bending canes and the crashing sound of broken branches.

"The birds were numerous, and at times, when we issued from the silence and shadow of a narrow and verdure-tinted part of the stream into an open bend, where the rapids rattled and the light burst in, and the birds sang their wildwood song, it was, to use a simile of Mr. Bedlow, like a sudden transition from the cold, dull-lighted hall, where the gentlemen hang their hats, into the white and golden saloon, where the music rings and the dance goes on. The hawk, upon the topmost branch of a blighted tree, moved not at our approach, and the veritable nightingale ceased not her song, for she made day into night in her covert among the leaves; and the bulbul, whose sacred haunts we disturbed when the current swept us among the overhanging boughs, but

chirruped her surprise, calmly winged her flight to another sprig, and continued her interrupted melodies. . . .

"Our course down the stream was with varied rapidity. At times we were going at the rate of from three to four knots an hour, and again we would be swept and hurried away, dashing and whirling onward with the furious speed of a torrent. At such moments there was excitement, for we knew not but that the next turn of the stream would plunge us down some fearful cataract, or dash us on the sharp rocks which might lurk beneath the surface. Many islands—some fairy-like, and covered with a luxuriant vegetation, others, mere sand-banks and sedimentary deposits, intercepted the course of the river, but were beautiful features in the monotony of the shores. The regular and almost unvaried scene, of high banks of alluvial deposit and sand-hills on the one hand, and the low shore, covered to the water's edge with tamarisk, the willow, and the thick, high cane, would have been fatiguing without the frequent occurrence of sand-banks and verdant islands. High up on the sand-bluffs, the cliff-swallow chattered from her nest in the hollow, or darted about in the bright sunshine, in pursuit of the gnat and the water-fly."[1]

[1] Lynch, *Narrative*, 211—215.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE DEAD SEA.

How vast is the interval between the present day and the time of the earlier of those events which have given the Dead Sea and the Jordan an interest so imperishable! The ancient world has passed away, and the modern world has grown old since then. And yet, though the hosts of Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome, the swift squadrons of the Saracens, and the mailed battalions of the Crusaders, who played their part in those remote events, have disappeared, with all the generations they represent, the Jordan still flows in its bed as it did on the day when Joshua led the Hebrew tribes over it; and the clear blue waters of the Dead Sea fill the same hollow as when they reflected the lightnings on that dreadful day when fire and brimstone from the Lord rained down from heaven on the Cities of the Plain. The peaks and rounded tops of the mountains of Moab and Judæa have been unchanged since the waters of the Deluge. Nature lives, but what a shadow is man, and what shadows he pursues! On that bank, yonder, stood John the Baptist, in his camel's-hair "abba:"[1] lean, and fiery-eyed, like one of the Bedouins of to-day; full of glowing zeal to prepare his nation for the expected Messiah. Round him stood a crowd of men, of all classes, baptised and not yet baptised, in whose faces one could read the intense longing of their hearts. Sighing

[1] Matt. iii. 4.

for a Redeemer who should deliver them from the deep misery of the times and the still deeper misery of sin, they little dreamed that He stood unrecognised in their midst.[1]

I did not bathe in the Jordan, but others did so, though it is not very easy of approach. In one place reeds and rushes stood in the way; at another, a bed of deep mud bars access, especially in the little bends; at a third, the bank was so steep that one could not get down to the water. The ride to the Dead Sea from Beth-Hoglah varies in features as one is near the river or at a short distance from it. The bushy terrace at the side of the stream is, as I have said, far below the upper banks, and more than twenty feet lower than this the water flows between upright sides, with constant twists and turnings. Leaving the banks, the soil was soft and earthy, with numerous furrows and seams left by the rains; but no vegetation was to be seen as we came nearer the Dead Sea, except in the beds of small flat wadys, which had a sprinkling of stunted herbage.

Close to the sea, the view was a little more kindly, herbage of different sorts and small flowers dotting the ground, in some places almost to the edge of the water. The northern bank rises only a few feet above the lake, and small waves played, in slow dimples and murmurs, against the level strand. For the most part, however, the shore was a shingly slope of about fifteen feet, strewn with a large quantity of driftwood, crusted over with the salt of the water. As a whole, the north shore is barren and treeless, with a delta of soft mud and marsh, from which spring a few rushes. In some places, the rocks come very near the water, and the beach is strewn with huge boulders and stones, fallen from the cliffs. No one could

[1] Matt. iii. 1.

cross the Jordan just where it enters the lake, soft mud flats, with plentiful driftwood embedded in them, forbidding the passage of either man or beast. The view around was very fine. East and west, lofty ridges seemed to spring from the water, their fronts cut into deep clefts by the winter torrents. Near at hand was a small island composed entirely of stones. One would not have supposed that the beautifully clear water was impregnated with salt to the extent of no less than from twenty-four to twenty-six per cent. of its weight; seven per cent. of this being common salt, while the rest consists of the salts of various metals. The lake stretched away to the south in placid beauty, between its yellow mountain banks, under the deep-blue sky, itself almost as blue. It is forty-six miles long, and ten miles broad where widest. Two or three friends ventured to bathe, and those who did so seemed to enjoy it, though it was necessary to rub the skin and hair well on coming out, as otherwise small crystals of salt were formed when the water dried, and an oily feeling was left on the body. To open the mouth when swimming ensures a gulp of water more bitter than agreeable, almost taking away the breath by its taste. To float, it is only necessary to lie back; you cannot sink. Cloths wetted with the water seemed, when dry, to have been dipped in some oily fluid, but no evil consequences follow a bathe, beyond swollen and chapped lips. The saltness may be imagined from the fact that drops falling on one's clothes leave a white mark behind on drying, as if wax had fallen on them instead of water.

It is a mistake to think that there is no life round the sea, though there is certainly none in it. Fish brought down by the Jordan die on entering the lake, and there are no shell-fish; but the oases, here and there on both sides, are filled with life of all forms, nor is

it unfrequent to see divers and ducks flying over the waters or swimming joyfully on their bosom. The basin of the lake is a huge cup or bowl, sinking nine hundred feet sheer down close to the Moab shore, and in its deepest part 1,310 feet below the surface of the water, which makes it in its darkest depths nearly four thousand feet below the streets of Jerusalem. The southern part, however, is a mere flat, covered with about twelve feet of water, and in great measure divided from the deeper portion by a tongue of land, which runs out from the eastern shore. Besides the Jordan, which pours into it about six million tons of water daily, the lake receives the flow of three permanent streams on its eastern side, one of them the Arnon of the Bible. There is, besides, a tributary stream on the south, and another, that at Engedi, on the west. These vary in their force, but always flow more or less strongly. The ravines, moreover, become torrent beds after the rains, and, together, must pour a large quantity of water into the lake in winter. There are, besides, many springs, fresh, warm, or salt, which run into it, all helping to increase its volume, for it has no outlet. Yet, notwithstanding this huge accumulation of water, the level of the lake in winter is only a few feet above its height in summer; not more, apparently, in the wettest years, than fifteen feet.[1] This is enough, however, to cover several miles of the low, sloping shallow at the south which are bare in summer, the water apparently extending sometimes even eight to ten miles farther in the one season than in the other.

That the sea does not fill up the framework of hills and wadys around it with a spreading and accumulating

[1] Canon Tristram thinks the rise and fall not more than four feet (*Pict. Pal.*, i. 157). Dr. Robinson and others estimate it as in the text. The Survey Party found it in 1874 to be fifteen feet.

flood, is due solely to the great evaporation, at a depth so far below the level of the sea. Shut in by hills on all sides from any cooling breezes, the tropical heat of the "ghor" raises from the surface of the lake a greater amount of water, in vapour, than is poured into it from the Jordan and all other sources.[1] A thick mist, from this cause, lies over the surface when the sun is under the horizon, and the air is at all times full of steaming moisture. It is the constant separation from the lake of vast quantities of absolutely fresh water, all saline particles being left behind, that causes the exceeding saltness of what remains, just as in the case of the Salt Lake of Utah. Saline particles, moreover, are being constantly poured into it from the tributaries of the Jordan, and there are, besides, several small streams which flow into it at its south end from a vast salt deposit that rises into a series of low hills several miles long, and which bring constant additions of brine. Yet, wherever a stream of fresh water flows, the warmth and moisture, together, create charming nooks, where the palm-tree grows almost to the edge of the lake.

The extraordinary depth of the water on the eastern side—nine hundred feet, perpendicular, from the shore—is due to the great geological convulsions that formed the whole Jordan valley as it at present exists. At some epoch very remote, though comparatively recent in geological chronology, the present bed of the valley, through its whole length, from Beisan to the watershed

[1] It has been calculated that while the average quantity of water received daily by the Dead Sea cannot be more than 20,000,000 cubic feet, the evaporation may be taken at 24,000,000 cubic feet daily. *Journal für Prakt. Chemie*, Leipzig, 1849, 371. In apparent contradiction to this, however, the Arabs say that the lake is now deeper than it was fifty years ago, fords once passable on donkeys being no longer so. These fords are at the shallow, southern end.

between it and the Red Sea, and even further north and south, must have sunk by a sudden and tremendous cleaving of the whole crust of the earth, the crack running along the eastern edge. The rocks corresponding to those that now form that side were buried, on the western side, in the chasm, so that they have disappeared. Hence, on the east we have lofty hills consisting, at the base, of sandstone, on which rest beds of hard limestone; while at the south-western end of the lake the limestone is wanting, and beds of rock-salt tower up, apparently over the sandstone. These speak of distant geological eras, but on the west side we have, instead of them, approximately recent soft beds of chalk and allied rocks, broken and dislocated from west to east, and often strangely twisted. The fact that these strata slope to the east, and the cracks and shifting of level at different places, prove that they must have been deposited before the great cleavage took place, while beds rich in fossils lying above them show the tremendous height of the waters in those early days. The lake must, till that time, have stood nearly fourteen hundred feet higher than it does at present,[1] so that it must have extended from Lebanon to the Akabah ridge north of the Red Sea—a length of nearly two hundred miles from north to south. Its shrinking, however, was very gradual, for, as we shall see, there are raised beach terraces of various heights above the present level.

This strange difference in the state of things in Palestine in these remote ages is in part explained by the fact that for a very long period the country was very rainy. Proofs of this are found in the remains of ancient lake-beds, in the existence of terraces left by streams on the hill-sides, far above their present level, and in the great

[1] Hull, *Mount Seir*, 180—181.

size and width of many valleys and gorges, now waterless except after rain-storms. This watery time, it is believed, extended from the era of the latest rocks in the geological system, through the glacial period, to recent times. Perennial snow and glaciers existed in Lebanon during the Great Ice Age, and this probably gave Palestine a climate something like that of Britain at the present day, involving an abundant rainfall in a country many parts of which are more than two thousand feet above the sea. And even when the snows and glaciers of the Lebanon had disappeared, the rainy character of the climate must have only gradually passed away, so that vegetation would be comparatively luxuriant as late as the period of human habitation.[1]

Volcanic action on a great scale took place in Palestine in those remote ages. In Lebanon, on the Sea of Galilee, in the Haurân, at different points in the Jordan valley, and all along both sides of the Dead Sea, rocks occur which were poured forth as lava from burning mountains. These outbursts are of various ages, but for the most part seem to date from the period when the lake stretched as far north as the small lake Huleh, the ancient Merom, and the great glens of Moab and Western Palestine were so many fiords or bays. The huge crack which had dislocated the strata in the Jordan valley, letting down those on the western side to a great depth below their former position, while those on the eastern side remained unaffected, seems to have permitted the water, then so very deep, to force its way into the glowing abyss, under the thin solid crust of the earth, and thus to create a vast body of vapour, or steam, which caused the volcanic explosions, and the outpourings of melted rocks; for water is now recognised as necessary to volcanic

[1] Hull, *Mount Seir*, 182.

activity. Or it may have been that the filtration of water through the bottom of the great ancient sea may have caused this vast dislocation, or "fault." The pressure of the water diminishing as the inland sea shrank lower and lower and the fissure through which its waters had filtered into the subterranean fires closed up, these volcanic forces gradually died out; no signs of activity being known in the historical period, or, indeed, for ages before it, though earthquakes are still, unhappily, too common.

The shrinking of the Dead Sea to its present size was, however, as has been already said, very gradual. On the eastern side, the mountains rise too steeply from the water to allow traces of ancient beaches to have gathered on them, but on the gentler western slopes the story of the subsidence of the waters is written by their own hand, if I may say so, as far north as the "Horn of Surtabeh," half way to the Lake of Galilee. Raised beaches of chalky marl and very salt gypsum, on which no vegetation can live, run along the hill-sides, at six hundred, four hundred, three hundred, one hundred, seventy, and thirty feet above the present level of the waters: a long pause in the shrinking up of the lake intervening at each of the periods marked by these ancient coast-lines. But the present limits must have been those of the earliest historical age, else the sites inhabited in the plain of the Jordan in Joshua's day would have been then submerged.

The great size of the ravines and valleys at the sides of the lake, and, indeed, throughout Palestine, is less astonishing when we notice the violence of winter storms, even now, when the rainfall has so greatly diminished. In the Wady Kelt a violent rain fills the upper and narrower parts of the gorge, in half an hour, to a depth

of from eight to ten feet, and the lower, broader parts, to a depth of three or four feet, so that the wady is at times entirely dry, and at others impassable. The question, however, often forced itself on me, how there could be such a vast quantity of broken rock and boulders in every torrent bed, and over all the hill-slopes throughout the country; for the whole land appears as if it were buried beneath a universal rain of ballast, large and small. There is less stone on the maritime plain than elsewhere, but all through the hill-country, from Beersheba to Baalbek, it is hardly too much to say that you can see very little of the soil for the stones upon it, and that the hills are cased in a thick bed of fragments from their own surface. It does not matter whether the mountain, hill, or cliff be of hard or soft rock; its outer coat is generally rotten, whether it be granite, basalt, or limestone. The sides, as you climb them, seem like the rubbish of a quarry, even your horse having difficulty in choosing where to put his feet securely.

The explanation of this strange peculiarity is to be found in the heat of the sun. The mountains of South-Equatorial Africa are spoken of by Mr. Stanley as "skeletons," and the splitting up of their surface, he tells us, is so extensive, that the cracking may be heard as one passes over them. It is the same in India and in Palestine. During the day, the rays of a nearly vertical sun raise the temperature of the rocks to an extraordinary degree, so that all moisture is expelled, and the stone is unnaturally expanded. After sunset, when this excessive heat rapidly passes off into the air, their temperature is necessarily lowered very quickly, till, through the night, it falls from 90° Fahrenheit in the shade, and 120° in the sun, to 45° or 50°. Renewed daily, this expansion and contraction splits up the layers and

joints, all over the surface, reducing it to a vast heap of loose fragments. A heavy rainstorm falling on these bare stones, protected by no coating of turf as in England, completes the wreck. The deluge rushes down every hill-slope as our storms pour down the roof of a house, and sweeps away the loosened rock with incredible violence into the wadys and over the plains, far and near, leaving the hills clear for a repetition of the same process of breaking up and subsequent washing away.

Perhaps the finest view of the Dead Sea is that from the lofty cliffs on the western side, where the Jordan enters. The eye sweeps southwards nearly as far as Engedi. On the east, the yellowish-red mountains of Moab, extending beyond the southern horizon, pass northwards into those of Gilead, which trend on, in a sea of rounded tops, till the view is closed. Light and shade throw one part into brightness and cover another with purple, varied by the deeper obscurity of great ravines, like those of the Callirrhoë and the Arnon. A line of tall reeds fringes the plain, twelve hundred feet below, beyond which the lake lies blue and shining, with the long peninsula of the Lisan, or "Tongue," at the southern end, and many small spits of shore, sparkling in the light like silver. Nor is the landscape less striking from the shore itself, though in some respects different. The lofty cliffs of the western side, rising above the long slope of wreck fallen from them, and hiding them from sight far up their height; the blue waters; the rich verdure of every spot reached by moisture; and the bright colours of the sandstone on the eastern shore, showing every colour but green, make a picture one can never forget.

The chalk hills on the western side are marked by the presence of bitumen in them, both liquid and in a solid form, and in some places by layers of rock-salt. Between

the mouth of the lake and Engedi, indeed, the marl is so strongly impregnated with bitumen at some points that it burns like our bituminous shale, and a strong odour of bitumen is given off by the hills. The cliffs run alongside the lake at a distance, in some parts, of half a mile, though they often come very near it; but it is a weary and desolate ride to reach Engedi—now called Ain Jidy—"the Kids' Fountain"—half way down the coast. About three miles north of it, however, a momentary break is made in the oppressive desolation by coming on strong sulphur springs, which bubble up from the gravel, at a temperature of 95° Fahrenheit, blackening the hands and covering the boots with yellow as you scoop out a hollow. The temperature of the spring is so high that it raises that of the lake, where it flows into it, nearly twenty degrees, and one may easily imagine that mineral waters so strong, and of a kind so much valued in different ailments, must have been utilised for baths in the prosperous days of the country. Now, however, the water runs to waste. A very rough track, or rather scramble without a track, brings one to the plain of Engedi, which slopes upwards from the lake to the foot of the cliffs, about half a mile behind. Two small streamlets cross it, but neither is the true Engedi, which springs down the cliffs in silver threads from its fountain some hundreds of feet up the hill-side. In the centre of the plain, which is about a mile and a half from north to south, but of no great width, are some ruins built of square stones, not very large, and much eaten into by time: all that remains of the old-world city of Hazazon-Tamar—"the Felling of the Palm," "which is Engedi."[1] Thousands of years ago a town stood here, when Abraham was a wanderer in the land, and Lot dwelt in Sodom, and it was near it that the

[1] 2 Chron. xx. 2.

petty kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, with their allies, attacked the host under Chedorlaomer, as it returned laden with the spoils of the Negeb and descended to the Salt Sea by the precipitous path which still leads to this spot from the lofty table-land above.[1] It was in the numerous caverns on the face of the precipice of Engedi that David hid himself when Saul took with him "three thousand men, and went to seek him and his men, upon the rocks of the wild goats." Still later, it was up the steep path on the face of these rocks that the forces of Moab and Ammon climbed to invade Judah, though their confidence was turned into panic by a battle among themselves in the Valley of Berachah.[2] Strange to say, this is the very route still taken by any band from Moab desirous of making a raid on Southern Palestine. Passing round the south of the Dead Sea, they make for Engedi, and then mount to the table-land, twelve hundred feet above the lake, as their best road to Hebron, Tekoa, or Jerusalem, whichever they may think most likely to yield plunder.

The plain is now desolate, though once famous for its palm-groves, and the slopes behind it, once a proverb for their vineyards,[3] know nothing of them now, though the terraces on which they grew are still to be seen, step above step, up all the hills around, as high as the Fountain. But the henna shrub in those vineyards, to which the Beloved is compared, is still found on this spot; in vivid illustration of the sacred text. For it is not "a cluster of camphire," but of henna, which the Hebrew poet introduces; a plant eight or ten feet high, with clusters of yellow and white blossoms, highly esteemed for their fragrance. A paste, moreover, is made from its pounded leaves, and used by women of every class, and by rich or luxurious men, to dye the palms of the hands, the soles of the feet,

[1] Gen. xiv. 7. [2] 2 Chron. xx. 2. [3] Cant. i. 14; iv. 13.

and the nails, which it makes of a reddish colour. Instead of palms and vines, there are only a few acacia-trees, a tamarisk, a few bushes, and, now and then, the "osher" of the Arab, which is the true apple of Sodom.[1] A very tropical-looking plant, its fruit is like a large smooth apple, or orange, and hangs in clusters of three or four together. When ripe, it is yellow, and looks fair and attractive, and is soft to the touch, but if pressed, it bursts with a crack, and only the broken shell and a row of small seeds in a half-open pod, with a few dry filaments, remain in the hand. Close round the Fountain, and on the edge of the two springs north and south of it, Engedi can be seen at the best, and even then the reeds and verdure that line the course of the springs are not visible till one reaches their sunken beds.

The Fountain itself gushes from under the rock, high up on the slope of the cliff, at a temperature of 79° Fahrenheit, and broadening out over a patch of gravelly sand, presently begins its course down-hill, marked, as it descends, by a winding fringe of green, till it is lost in the soil beyond. Freshwater crabs, and some other small shell-fish, are the only living creatures found in its basin. Traffic is still carried on by the path climbing past the Fountain; salt being thus carried from the south of the lake to Bethlehem on files of donkeys, by Arabs who wisely travel well armed, to guard against the dangers of the route. There are still many wild goats on the face of the lofty cliffs, but pursuit of them is hopeless, except for a hunter accustomed to perilous work in such places. North of the Fountain is found the source of the spring seen on the plain below; a very delight for its rich luxuriance of all kinds of foliage. In long-past ages, a spot like this, utilised as it would be, must have been thought a very

[1] See *ante* p. 74.

paradise in such surroundings. Could it be that this delightful nook, concealed within almost impenetrable jungle, was known to David when he hid in this neighbourhood? No place could be conceived more suited for a soul like his, so full of poetry and devotion. Who can tell but that some of his sacred lyrics may have been prompted by its inspirations?

From the Fountain to the top of the mountains the path is almost a ladder, impassable to any horse or other beast of burden not used to such terrible climbing. To have ascended it, the Moabites and Ammonites must have had little to carry, for it is hard enough for man or beast to get up, even almost unencumbered.

The Cities of the Plain stood on some part of the plain of Jericho, which in Abraham's day was much the same as it is now. The shape of the basin of the sea, and its geological history, make it impossible that any towns could have existed except at its northern or southern end, but those which perished are expressly called the Cities of the *Plain*, or "Circle" of the Jordan; an expression used only of the slopes reaching, on both sides, from the hills to the river, immediately before it enters the lake. Abraham and Lot, moreover, could see the fertile region of Sodom and Gomorrah from the hill-top on which they stood, between Bethel and Ai, but intervening hills shut out the southern end of the sea, which is sixty miles off, from any point near that from which the patriarchs looked down into the great depression, while they could see the plain of Jericho and the rich green of the Sultan's Spring, as if at their feet. Nor could Abraham, as he stood at his tent door at Mamre, have seen, as he did, "the smoke of the country rising like the smoke of a furnace," as he looked "towards Sodom and Gomorrah," had they been at the south end of the lake; whereas the openings between

the hills are such that, though the plain itself is not visible from near Hebron, the clouds of smoke ascending from the doomed cities must have been seen in all their grandeur. That Chedorlaomer, on his way north from Mount Seir, after smiting the Amorites at Engedi, should have fallen upon the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah in the plains of Siddim, continuing his march northwards towards home after defeating them, so that in his turn he was overcome by Abraham near the sources of the Jordan, further implies that the Cities of the Plain were north of the Dead Sea. Still more, the fact that Moses, from his lofty outlook on Mount Pisgah, "beheld the Negeb and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm-trees, unto Zoar," requires that this landscape should have been that of the northern end of the sea, for the other end cannot be seen from the neighbourhood from which Moses surveyed the landscape. Sodom and Gomorrah must therefore, apparently, have stood either on the eastern or western side of the Jordan, just above the lake; probably on the eastern. Both sides of the river are remarkable for the number of mounds which dot them—silent monuments of ancient towns or cities, for excavations in any of them bring to light fragments of pottery, and burnt or sun-dried bricks, and even fragments of pillars, and stones squared by the mason. In all probability, some of these indicate the true sites of the long-lost cities.

There is no reason, from the language of Scripture, to think of these cities as submerged, nor is the mode of their destruction difficult to understand. The whole region is full of the materials for such a catastrophe as overtook them. Wells of liquid bitumen, or, as we may call it, petroleum, abounded in the neighbourhood, and vast quantities of it ooze through the chalky rocks, while the bottom of the lake is bedded with it, vast masses rising to

the surface after any convulsion, as in the case of the great earthquake of 1837. Indeed, huge cakes float up, at times, even when there is no seismal disturbance, and are seized by the Bedouins, who carry what they can gather to Jerusalem for sale. Sulphur abounds, in layers and fragments, over the plains and along the shores of the lake. We have only, therefore, to imagine a terrific storm, in which the lightning kindled this vast accumulation of combustibles, aided, perhaps, by an earthquake setting free additional stores from the hill-sides and the lake depths, to have a conflagration, the fiery sulphurous sparks and flames of which would in very deed be fire and brimstone out of heaven, burning up the whole district, with all the towns or cities on it. The fullest and only reliable account of this stupendous judgment is that given in Scripture, but it is the subject of local traditions, and ancient Assyria has left us a striking legend which seems to have sprung from it.[1]

No one appears to have passed along the eastern shore of the lake since the famous traveller Seetzen did so, in 1807. The whole journey is over a region in vivid keeping with the story of the destruction of the doomed cities. It was only with the greatest difficulty that any progress could be made, so rough and almost impassable was the track. The rocks stand up in a succession of huge terraces; on the lowest of which, but still far above the water, lies the path, if path it can be called which leaves one to climb and force himself through and over a chaos of enormous blocks of limestone, sandstone, and basalt, fallen from the cliffs above, or brings him abruptly to a stand before wild clefts in the solid walls of the precipice. The range of salt hills at the south, known as Jebel Usdum, is no less worthy of its place as a boundary of the

[1] Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, i. 392.

Sea of Death. Mr. Holman Hunt resided here for several days in 1854, and has given us in his terrible picture of "The Scapegoat" an embodiment of the landscape of that portion of the Dead Sea at sunset; a vision of the most appalling desolation. The salt hills run for several miles nearly east and west, at a height of from three hundred to four hundred feet, level atop, and not very broad; the mass being a body of rock-salt, capped with a bed of gypsum and chalk. Dislocated, shattered, furrowed into deep clefts by the rains, or standing out in narrow, ragged buttresses, they add to the weird associations of all around. Here and there, harder portions of the salt, withstanding the weather while all around them melts and wears off, rise up as isolated pillars, one of which bears, among the Arabs, the name of Lot's wife.[1] In front of the ridge, the ground is strewn with lumps and masses of salt, through which streamlets of brine run across the long muddy flat towards the beach, which itself sparkles in the sun with a crust of salt, shining as if the earth had been sown with diamonds. Everywhere, except at the very few spots where fresh springs, or streams, enter it, the lake deserves the evil name it has borne for ages. The stillness of death reigns. Here and there, indeed, birds sing and twitter on its banks, and in favoured spots rich vegetation covers the rocks; Bedouins, pilgrims, and travellers visit its shores; but these gleams of life only deepen the impression of its unutterable loneliness. In connection with the awful story of Sodom and Gomorrah, it seems written over with a curse and blighted by the judgment of Heaven, and this seems to have been the feeling even in Bible times, for in the blissful days of the Messiah, as painted by Ezekiel, the salt sea is to give place to a wide expanse of living and cheerful waters.[2]

[1] Gen. xix. 26. [2] Ezek. xlvii. 8.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MAR SABA.

It would be unpardonable in anyone who visits the Jordan valley not to make his way to the strange old-world monastery of Mar Saba, named after "Saint Sabas," who was born so long ago as A.D. 439, in Cappadocia, and at the age of eighteen turned hermit and founded this monastery in the wild hills over the Dead Sea. The easiest route to this strange community, which offers such a link with early Christianity, is by a track leading westwards from the shore of the Dead Sea, up the Wady Feshkhah. It runs at first across the border of the lake, through scattered weeds and gaunt shrubs, which break the utter barrenness of the undulating chalky ground, aided in some spots by a few patches of reeds and flowers. After little more than a mile, these earth-waves begin to swell into low hills, white, like the soil of the plain. No rocks are visible, however, till the mountains are reached, but the scene around is still very bare and uninviting. Among the upper hills, grass shoots out here and there from the clefts of the rocks, as the way continues in successive easy upward and downward slopes; at one time through a narrow wady, which shuts out the view except of its rough sides; at another, up the mountains, to a small plain above; then, presently, down to a valley; all alike desolate.

A little more than a mile before reaching Mar Saba

the path leads to a tremendous gorge, which is part of the Valley Kedron, or, in Arabic, the Wady en Nar. Perpendicular precipices rise more than six hundred feet above the abyss from which they spring, but a well-built road, guarded by a strong stone fence, leads one safely high up the west side of the chasm, and brings the monastery in sight. Its lofty, massive towers are seen clinging to the almost plumb-line sides of bare rocks rising up wildly above it, and sinking beneath it into frightful depths, with great walls of rock, hundreds of feet up and down, forming the other side of the wady, and the only view before the monks on the eastern side of the valley. Fearful desolation and loneliness reign around. You seek in vain for a blade or leaf of green, to relieve the bareness of the shattered and weathered rocks. In summer the heat reflected from the naked precipices is almost unendurable, and in winter the rains stream in torrents from the heights, checked by no soil or herbage.

In an age like the fifth century, when the Roman Empire was breaking up, and the world itself seemed sinking into ruin, the craving after retirement from universal commotion and storm drove multitudes to seek a retreat in the loneliest spots they could find. Among these, few could realise the ideal of entire banishment from mankind more than Mar Saba. Early known from its nearness to the holy places of the faith, it was natural that in such a troubled age it should attract numerous hermits. A passion for desert life had seized almost every earnest soul. Hither, therefore, came an army of eremites, who hewed out for themselves small caves in these rocks, and used them for dwellings. Multitudes of such cells are to be seen on both sides of the awful gorge, for there were in this part at one time as many as 10,000 of these renouncers of the world. From among these, the anchorite

Sabas, about the middle of the fifth century, collected a number who agreed to live together, and thereupon he laid the foundation of the cloister which bears his name. Many storms have passed over it in the fourteen centuries since his day, for it has often been plundered and laid waste, and hundreds of monks have perished by the sword or spear of the foe. Indeed, even in this century it has been once more surprised and plundered by a Bedouin horde, so that its defenceless loneliness, in the wild hills, has from the earliest times made fortifications a necessity. The famous Emperor Justinian contributed to these a watch-tower, which rises imposingly on the north side of the monastery, and still shows its high antiquity by remnants of peculiar masonry, though it has been in great measure rebuilt, with its connecting walls, within the last fifty years. How the stones were ever brought to such a place, or built up into the castle-like wall which rises, step over step, from the precipitous abyss, clinging to the nearly upright slope till it joins the tower above the monastery, is a mystery. Fortunately, such a defence was needed only on one side, for a yawning chasm effectually protects the other. Steps cut out from the dry torrent bed below lead, in one direction, to a carefully fortified postern, and, in another, to the flat shelf above, from which the tower rises. To secure space for the monastery, huge buttresses have been piled up on a slight bend in the rocks and filled in behind, so that the main buildings can rest against them. Above this rise the cells of the monks, clinging to the mountain, one over the other, like swallows' nests, rude balconies of many patterns projecting from before them, over the dizzy chasm, and forming a picture as romantic as can be imagined.

To obtain admission, it is necessary to have with you

an order from the Greek monastery at Jerusalem, and this you must put into a basket, let down from the watch-tower by the monk who is on duty there for the time. If, after being carefully examined, it prove satisfactory, a little iron-barred door is opened, and you are admitted. No Bedouin or woman is allowed to enter on any account, but a tower outside has been set apart for their lodging, and they are supplied with the simple fare of the monks. Inside the iron door, a second gate, at the bottom of some steps, admits to a second flight. At the foot of this we reach a small courtyard, with a still smaller garden, from which a third flight of stairs leads to the guest-chamber. All this masonry, and, indeed, every part of the stonework throughout the monastery, is admirably substantial, as if intended to serve many generations of inmates. The whole scene presents a confusion of small courts, chapels, churches, cells, projecting windows or terraces, and microscopic gardens, for every spot that will hold soil is utilised to redeem the savagery of the landscape by refreshing green. A solitary palm rises at the very edge of the monastery plateau, waving over the deeps below, and fig-trees send out their branches at every corner. The holiest part of the establishment is a low cave which has been made into a double chapel, where you are shown the grave of St. Sabas, and the skulls of some hundreds of monks, who are said to have fallen before the Persian invader Chosroes, in the beginning of the seventh century. East of this cave, on the very edge of the abyss, stands a roomy church, renovated of late years by the Emperor of Russia, who has fitted up its interior richly with gold and silver, but also with hateful paintings, in the style of the Greek Church. In the tower over the church are three small bells, whose sound is heard as far as the west side of the Dead Sea,

where it falls on the ear of the Christian traveller with a wonderful impressiveness in these regions lonely as the grave. From the terrace on the roof of the church you look sheer down into the awful depths. Underneath the church is the cistern from which the monks draw their best water. The cave in which St. Sabas lived and died is also within the walls—a grotto of two chambers, only fit for a dwelling to one resolute in self-denial. The library of the monastery formerly contained about a thousand manuscripts in Greek, and several of parts of the Old Testament, but the monks are not literary, and these treasures have wisely been removed to a monastery near Jerusalem. The community, indeed, are profoundly ignorant, as they well may be, since they attend seven services every twenty-four hours, between four in the morning and midnight. They never taste fresh meat, and eggs only on Sundays; a small brown loaf, some cabbage broth, some olives, an onion, half an orange, quarter of a lemon, six figs, and half a pint of weak wine, being their daily allowance through the week. But with all this apparent self-denial there is no religious activity. The monks, who are drawn from Turkey, Greece, the Archipelago, or Russia, content themselves with barren idleness, so far as the advancement of their Church is concerned.

It is very pleasant, in such a place, to see the small, well-tended gardens in which these recluses cultivate vegetables and flowers. Some vines, growing where possible, form refreshing flecks of shade in the blinding sunshine by being trained over rude frames of poles standing out from the doorways or walls; but even with their help there is very little shelter from the light and heat. Nor can it be easy for novices to accustom themselves to some of the cells, which are close to the precipice, with no protection before them, so that even to see their inmates sitting on

places so dangerous makes one involuntarily shudder. The solitary palm tells its own tale of the situation, for it is secured with chains, to prevent its toppling into the abyss below. The birds and wild animals which frequent the neighbourhood are the only companions the monks can be said to have. Here man and the humbler creatures live on the friendliest footing with each other. Canon Tristram noticed a wolf which came every evening, as the bell tolled six, to get a piece of bread dipped in oil and dropped over the wall to him by a monk at that hour. A whole pack of jackals also came regularly to be fed, and a small troop of foxes. Even the timid grackles, which are found only round the Dead Sea, perch in flocks at Mar Saba, catch berries as they are thrown into the air by some recluse, sit on the shoulders of their human friends, eat out of their hands, and allow themselves to be played with and stroked; a wonderful illustration of the power of human love over lower nature, carrying one back to the old days of Paradise, or forward to the Millennium.

An evening at Mar Saba is an experience one cannot forget. There are nearly always travellers of different nationalities visiting so curious a place during the season. As they arrive, their tents are set up in the little glen on the west, the crowd of mules and horses attending them being picketed before the monastery, which, for the time, is turned into a hospice on a large scale. Peasants offer memorials of Mar Saba—sticks, rosaries, and the like, at wonderfully low prices for the locality; Arab guides, mule-drivers, Greek monks, and travellers, perhaps from France, Germany, England, and America, talk, each in his own language, till it seems like a reproduction of the noisy confusion of the gift of tongues. In the refectory, long tables are covered with pleasant white cloths, and wax candles in tasteful holders light up the shining plates and

dark wine-flasks, as in some European inn of modest pretensions. The men connected with the tents bake their bread outside the cloister, in the hot ashes of the fires, turning the dough carefully and often, that it may not burn; just as Sarah did when she "made [round] cakes on the hearth," that is, on the wood ashes, for the three mysterious visitors to her husband's tent.[1] This is the common way of preparing bread among Orientals at the present day when they are in haste or on a journey, but it has been practised from the earliest times. The bread baked by the Israelites on the night of their departure from Egypt was made thus.[2] Even their manna-bread seems to have been cooked by them under the ashes, into which it was put in earthenware dishes.[3] The cake prepared for Elijah by the widow of Sarepta, and that which he found near the "retem" bush in the wilderness, were both from this primitive oven.[4] Hosea compares Ephraim to such a cake burnt, and yet only half baked, because the necessary turning had been neglected:[5] that is, to interpret the comparison, scorched by the judgments of God, but not benefited by them, as it would have been if they had been rightly used. Ezekiel also tells us, incidentally, that even in Babylon his countrymen baked their cakes of barley meal in the same fashion.[6] But the entertainment in Mar Saba must not be supposed to be very elaborate. Hospitable it certainly is, but it is of course limited to the simple fare which the monks can give, in a place so out of the world, and in such an abstinent community.

It is hard to realise a stranger spot than this lonely dwelling of men. Its huge flying buttresses, castellated

[1] Gen. xviii. 6. The word "ûgah" means a *round* cake of bread. The Septuagint and the Vulgate both translate the Hebrew word by "cakes baked in the ashes."

[2] Ex. xii. 39.

[3] Num. xi. 8.

[4] 1 Kings xvii. 13; xix. 6.

[5] Hos. vii. 8.

[6] Ezek. iv. 12.

walls, high towers, and steep ascent of churches, cells, guest-house, and offices, hard to be distinguished from the colour of the rocks to which they cling; the awful precipice of nearly four hundred feet, above and below, aptly called the Valley of Fire, bare and tawny, and falling sheer down, as if the hills had been violently rent apart by some terrible earthquake,—can never be forgotten. Nor is the silence less impressive, for no sounds ever disturb it but the bell-like notes of the grackle, the howl of the jackal or wolf, or the twittering of the swallow. The heat, moreover, is terrible in summer, for walls of chalk and high ridges shut out the refreshing western breeze, and there is no cooling green to temper the burning noon and soothe the imagination. Even in the caves of the old hermits, so numerous around, there is no relief, for they seem hotter than the open air. Yet this hideous desert has, from the earliest times, even before Christianity, been a favourite retreat of ascetics. Colonies of Essenes flourished here in the time of Christ. Scattered over the land, more than four thousand members of this strange community lived apart, in the villages and even in the towns, but their chief settlement was in this ghastly "Wilderness of Judæa," fitly called in Scripture "Jeshimon"—"The Solitude." They lived together like monks, wearing a white upper garment as their distinctive badge, and had rules as strict as those of any modern cloister; indeed, more so, from their supreme anxiety to observe all the ten thousand requirements of the Rabbinical law. In this wilderness, again, lived the hermit Banus, mentioned by Josephus, and it was in these frightful gorges that John the Baptist spent his years of meditation and prayer, before he made his appearance on the Jordan, calling his nation to repentance in preparation for the Messiah.

The mountains of this region, though still high above

the level of the Dead Sea, are very little above that of the Mediterranean, and consequently are far below the height of those to the west, towards Jerusalem and Bethlehem, from which one looks down on the locality of Mar Saba. The stratified limestone of these loftier hills no longer appears in the region of the monastery, but instead of it we have a soft white chalk, worn by the winter storms into long, sharp ridges, standing up high and rough between narrow gorges, the bottom of which is a mass of stones and boulders. A thin sprinkling of grass and flowers softens this forbidding landscape in spring, but that soon withers, and leaves, for nearly the whole year, only a bewilderment of strange knolls, peaks, rugged spurs, and knife-like ridges, utterly treeless and waterless, to reflect the glare of the sun from the universal whiteness. Behind the monastery, to the west, there is a wall of lofty hills, while to the east a table-land of water-worn marl, cut into innumerable ridges, knolls, peaks, ravines, and crags, stretches slowly downwards to the precipices, twelve hundred feet high, that overhang the Dead Sea.

Among the mountain-tops to the west of Mar Saba, the highest is that of El Muntar, "The Watch Tower," brown and barren, and marked by the steep slope, unbroken except by precipices, with which it descends to the plateau beneath. This hill, in Captain Conder's opinion, is famous as the scene of a yearly peculiarity of great interest in the old Jewish religious economy.[1]

Moses had ordered the scapegoat to be led to the wilderness and set free, but one having found its way back to Jerusalem in later times, it was felt that, to prevent the recurrence of an event so ominous, the creature should henceforth be led to the top of a high mountain,

[1] *Tent Work in Palestine*, 155.

from which there was a steep rolling slope, and pushed over, so that it might be killed before it reached the bottom. Sabbath was the day on which it was driven out from Jerusalem, and as the law forbidding a journey of more than two thousand cubits on that day hindered the new arrangement, means were found to evade it. At the limit of each legally permissible advance, a booth was erected to represent the home of the person in charge of the goat, and he had thus only to eat and drink in it, however slightly, to be able to flatter himself that he was setting out each time from his own house on a lawful journey. It required ten such booths between the hill selected and the Temple—a distance of about six and a half miles. This distance is just that of the lofty El Muntar, at which, beside the old road from Jerusalem, is a well called Suk, the name given by the Hebrews to the hill of the scapegoat, while the district, which they called Hidoodim, is still known as Hadeidûn.

It thus seems very reasonable to look on this mountain as that from the summit of which a poor goat was each year hurled into the gorge far below, in accordance with the letter of the command that it was to be let go into the wilderness,[1] for Jeshimon is seen from the top of El Muntar, sinking, in all its hideous desolation, to the east. It was only by a succession of legal fictions, however, that the goat-slayer could reach the fatal spot on the Sabbath, and the casuistry of the Rabbis could stretch conscience no farther. Having thrown the unfortunate animal down the steep, the messenger fell back on the usual Sabbath-day law for his return, and had to wait until sundown, when the Sabbath was over, before starting again for Jerusalem.

The reputation of the Mar Saba monks does not

[1] Lev. xvi. 8—10.

support the belief that either multiplicity of devotional services, or a life of seclusion and external simplicity, can secure the highest ideal of religious life. They are mostly old men, but their faces speak more of ignorance, or even of evil, not seldom dashed with abiding sadness, than of lofty enthusiasm or a noble striving for heaven. In their long black gowns and black hats—like our hateful stiff cylinders, though with the rim at the top instead of the bottom—they seem almost dead while they live. Hopeless and aimless, they vegetate in their strange home, half of them unable to read the manuscripts in their library, which they nevertheless carefully guard from the eyes of heretics. They may neither smoke nor eat meat inside the walls, but they manage occasionally to get raw spirits from travellers. Than theirs, no life could well be more pitiable.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TO EMMAUS AND KIRJATH JEARIM.

So many places famous in the Bible lie near Jerusalem that it seemed best to make a short excursion to some which were rather out of the way, before starting for the north. Leaving the city, therefore, by the Joppa Gate, and going westward, past a number of orchards belonging to Greek Christians, a quarter of an hour brought us to a height from which we had our last look, for the time, at the city of "the Great King." It had been raining, and the way was not only muddy, but crossed by large pools, so that our progress was neither rapid nor pleasant. Thanks to the Christians, a fresh valley showed flourishing orchards of mulberry-trees, where a few years ago all was desolation; and in a little side glen to the right, we passed a lofty, well-built structure reared by the Greek Patriarch, through the aid of Russia, as an upper school for both sexes, and also as a hospice for travellers. A monastery was erected on the site more than a thousand years ago, in the belief that the wood of Christ's cross was hewn from a tree on this spot, and even that it grew on the grave of Adam, our Saviour thus being linked in the most touching way, as the second Adam, with the first. From very early times myriads of pilgrims, accepting both legends, have streamed to this Convent of the Holy Cross to kiss the spot where the tree was supposed to have once stood. Simple they may be, but, let us hope, none

the less sincere and earnestly humble in their devotion to the Blessed One. The old church is still standing, though now surmounted by a clock-tower built in the Russian style, which sounds out its invitation to prayer over the villages around, with little effect on their Mahommedan inhabitants.

Beyond the monastery the valley broadens, and is varied by rounded heights and side openings. Ere long the village of Malhah came in sight, on a fairly green hill, nearly 2,500 feet above the sea, but not very much above the surrounding country. South of it, Sherafat, another hamlet of mud houses, crowned another height a little more elevated—for here, as elsewhere, the villages are on hill-tops, for safety. Gardens of roses cheered the way from time to time, and fine olive-groves were frequent. The roses were most numerous near a spring called Yalo, where the wady was hemmed in by high, steep walls of rock, about a mile south from Malhah. The fountain bubbles from the southern side of the glen, the water flowing in a stone tunnel, over a low stone wall. There were men, women, and children at it, with jars and skins, and other women washing very sorry linen; singing, I am glad to say, as they beat it with stones. Near at hand was a rain-pool with some water in it, the spring gliding past down the glen on its way to fructify gardens. Figs and olives covered the slope, over which the rocks shot up abruptly to a great height. The spot is naturally a favourite watering-place for the flocks of the surrounding hills. The little valley was green with the spring crops, but one could not even here forget mortality, for tombs, cut in the rocks, preached their quiet sermon as we passed. Fertility, moreover, was confined to the spots reached by the water, the hills being wretchedly barren and stony where there was none. This district is, however, rich in

springs, one—Ain Hanniyeh, about a mile beyond Ain Yalo—especially attracting attention by a structure over it, adorned with Corinthian pillars and a niche. From this the waters flowed at a height of about ten feet, in delightful fulness, forming a small pool below, from which a copious brook streamed pleasantly down the valley. A long wall ran along from both sides of the spring, about twenty feet above the path, to lead off water to irrigate terraces on the slope. Close to each other, an ass was drinking and a woman filling her water-jar at the pool. Fig-trees grew on the banks, and were just putting out their leaves; vines blending with them, as in the old Bible times when the vine and the fig-tree were planted together. Tulips, lilies, ranunculi, and cyclamens lighted up the borders of the grain-patches beside the waters of the fountain, as these flowed dimpling on to water the gardens of the valley through which the road to Gaza ran in early times. With this fact as its ground work, legend has very naturally created a story of this rich spring being that at which St. Philip baptised the eunuch. But though there is no basis for such a fancy, the road itself, which is at this place broad, and was once well made, may have been that by which the Chamberlain of Queen Candace rode homewards from Jerusalem.[1]

A slight descent leads from this spot to the hamlet of El Welejeh, which lies in the midst of cultivated ground high on the western side of a deep but short valley. Shepherds and peasants, with their flocks or at their work, enlivened the way, though our track was again impeded by the pools left by the late rains. About a mile beyond Welejeh lay the village of Bittir, on the south-west, high on a slope pleasantly banked with fine green terraces; a sparkling rivulet flowing down from it towards us, while

[1] Acts viii. 36—39.

the ancient road to Gaza ran up the hill through the village street. Nothing could be more inviting than this quiet nook, with its richly irrigated grain-patches and gardens, dotted with olive- and fig-trees, and fitted beyond many for the vine and mulberry. We may readily suppose that in ancient times its charms made it attractive, but now the hills around are left to nature, are rough with the stunted trees and bushes familiar in Palestine, and are haunted only by birds and wild beasts. They may, however, have been the same in early days, for the sacred poet in Canticles cries, "Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."[1] But there are other memories of the place. It was the scene of the final destruction of the Jewish power in the Holy Land, by the Romans, in the reign of Hadrian. Surrounded on every side except the south by deep and rugged gorges, and supplied with water by a spring rising in ground above it, Bether was a position immensely strong. The north side especially, with its steep cliffs springing from the bottom of the ravine, was virtually impregnable. At a quarter of a mile to the south of the present village, a shapeless mass of ruin preserves the memory of the great struggle, in its name, Khurbet el Yehud—"Ruin of the Jews." Perhaps it is a part of the strong citadel of the town. The leader in this tremendous struggle[2] was the pretended Messiah, Bar Cochba, who had at least the merit of tenacity, whatever his other shortcomings. The Rabbis, with their usual exaggeration, tell us that Bether was so large that it had four hundred synagogues and as many schools, each with four hundred children, but it is at least certain that it was a considerable place, even before the fall of Jerusalem, and rose to great prosperity after that event; not, perhaps, without a secret comfort in the

[1] Cant ii. 17. [2] See Vol. I., p. 91.

thought that the destruction of the capital was the fortune of the rival community. Rabbi Akaba, the standard-bearer of Bar Cochba, was taken prisoner and flayed alive when the city fell, repeating, as he died, the grand words of the morning prayer of the Temple, "Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord." Eighty thousand men are said to have fallen when Hadrian's soldiers rushed through the breaches of the walls, and the extinction of Jewish hope by the catastrophe was so complete—for the nation had been decimated in the revolt—that those who had hitherto hailed the leader of the insurrection as Bar Cochba—"the Son of a Star"—henceforth reviled him as Bar Cosiba—"the son of a lie."[1] But, discarding all legendary matter, there is something unspeakably touching in the presence of such a memorial of the death of an ancient nationality. For here, undoubtedly, in the year 136 of our era—sixty-four years after the destruction of Jerusalem—Israel fought its last despairing battle with its giant foe, and its last band of heroes perished with their leader, the Star-son, after having resisted the legions of Rome for three years and a half. It is wonderful how little remains of a place so important, but there are many similar cases in the Holy Land; the common houses, built only of mud, soon vanishing, while the cut stones of public buildings or mansions have been carried off for building material to modern towns.

It was pathetic in the extreme to notice the frequent ruins in this neighbourhood. Every hill had its own pile, speaking of a dense population in happier times, ages ago. The stream from Bittir ran for a time joyously over a broad bed down the little valley, but ere long sank below the stones which filled its course. There were no signs of human industry on the slopes or in the

[1] Hamburger, ii. 107.

hollow: all was overgrown with thorns and worthless bushes and weeds. The whole landscape, indeed, was now wild and uninhabited. Nowhere was a village or house to be seen in the glens and valleys, and a couple of patches of green on one of the slopes were the only sign that human beings were at all near. Rough bushes and scrub, mixed with beds of sage and thyme, dotted the chalky rocks, multitudinous fragments of which covered the path and made progress far from pleasant. It is from such places in the hills that the people get their fagots and charcoal for fuel. There are no trees, but only dwarfed brushwood, netting the hill-sides in wild brakes. The smoke of charcoal-burners' fires frequently rose, marking one great cause of the absence of trees, for these "hewers of wood," still poor landless creatures as of old,[1] do not content themselves with lopping off branches, but dig up even the roots of what wood there is.

Two miles and a half west from Bittir, the village of Er Ras broke the monotonous desolation, though it appeared that we had passed one small mud hamlet, on the south, without seeing it. The rounded summits, all alike grey and barren, were still about 2,400 feet above the sea, but valleys of all sizes ran in every direction among them, and the terraces on the slopes near the village showed that only labour was needed to make the desert break into fruitfulness. Cattle and goats fed on the slopes; and in the hamlet old and young gathered round to look at the rare sight of a stranger from the West. Outside the houses, or rather hovels, was a broad open space covered with smooth sheets of rock, the resting-place of the camels, cattle, sheep, and goats of the peasants, as was only too clear from the difficulty I found in getting a clean spot on which to sit down. No doubt

[1] Deut. xxix. 11; Josh. ix. 21, 27.

such a wide stony platform is used in autumn as a threshing floor, exposed as it is to the free sweep of the wind. Close to the hamlet, a miniature glen showed how strangely barrenness and fertility elbow each other in Palestine. Clear springs flowed in two places over the rocks into the hollow, and along their course among the stones, hemmed in by the yellow boulders, were some fine lemon-trees in their glory of green and gold, with a number of vines and fig-trees, and underneath there was a carpet of soft green. In vivid contrast with this delightful spot, the hill south-west from it rose utterly barren and desolate, nothing but thorns growing from amongst the stones with which it was thickly strewn. Yet there had once been a dense population in this region, for I counted no fewer than fourteen heaps of ruins in the neighbourhood, and when these were all inhabited, even the hills now washed so bare of soil, from the want of terraces to retain it, must have been more or less fertile.

Passing first west and then north, the track led up a long wady, to which a number of carob-trees lent a rare charm; but there were no human habitations near them. A spring flowing to the north was the secret of their presence, and, indeed, springs are numerous in all these Judæan highlands. They are, as Deuteronomy says, "a land of hills and valleys, that drinketh water of the rain of heaven:" [1] a land, as the Psalmist tells us, in which God "sendeth the springs into valleys, which run among the hills." [2] But the hills themselves still rose grey and barren as ever, though, as the road fell towards the next village of Deir-esh-Sheikh, there were some grain and bean patches in the valley, with silver-leaved olives rising beside them. The huts stand near each other, surrounded by green, but they were as rude as others

[1] Deut. xi. 11. [2] Ps. civ. 10.

elsewhere, the smoke of the household fires, kindled in some, having no egress except by the door. The houses of the poor must have been just like this in our Lord's day, for if there has been no improvement in such matters since He lived, there cannot well have been any actual retrogression.

The Wady Ismain, which is the name of this part of the great Wady Surar, or Sorek,[1] opened before us, after an ascent of about two hundred feet from Deir-esh-Sheikh, showing a stream, fed by the late rains, whirling on, grey and brown, some hundreds of feet below, between high walls of rock. Following this, though on the heights above it, a bend to the south brought in view the village of Beit Atab, which crowns an isolated hill rising some hundreds of feet above those around. The ridge along which our track lay, seamed with larger and smaller wadys, was a picture of desolation. Great lizards darted out and in among the stones: partridges flew up from among the bushes of *Spina Christi* and scrub of all kinds with which the white stony hill was thickly sprinkled. A shepherd in one of the wadys watched his sheep and goats, attended by his dog; mallows and other plants on the slopes giving a kind of thin pasture. About two miles east of Deir-esh-Sheikh lay the village of El Hawa, on the top of a hill 2,100 feet above the sea, looking far and wide over the frontier hills of Judah, and down into the great Philistine plain. Descending by very rough and often steep tracks, we reached Wady Najil, which runs north and south across the great Wady Surar. Hedges of prickly pear surrounded the gardens of Deir Aban, a small village. It was pleasant to see Zorah once more, its sweeping length and broad bosom rich with tender green. Nearly the whole width

[1] See Vol. I., p. 98.

of the valley was covered with rising crops of grain, through which the almost dry bed of the winter torrent twisted, serpent-like, hither and thither, in a deep white trench, looking from a distance like some grand military highway. The hills on the south of the wady sloped gently down; those on the north of it rose steep and high. Shepherds were driving home numerous herds of cattle as it drew near sunset; peasants, carrying home their light ploughs on their backs, wended their way to their village, some of them singing in their own nasal manner as they plodded on. All Orientals seem to sing thus, through the nose. Did David do so? Most likely, for manners never change in the East.

I was once more on the borders of Samson's country. There were the grey houses of Sura, on the steep hill-top where the hero was born and grew up, with the great valley winding down to the Shephelah at his feet. Bethshemesh, 250 feet below it, lay on the other side of the wady, about two miles off. It was here that King Amaziah of Judah was beaten by Jehoash, the King of the Ten Tribes, who thus justified the contemptuous message he had sent his foolhardy foe—"The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trod down the thistle."[1] About three miles rather south-east from Bethshemesh, lay Timnath, famous in Samson's story,[2] and three miles and a half due south from it was the Ashkelon where he slew the thirty Philistines, to get their "abbas," in payment for the riddle treacherously revealed by his Philistine wife.[3]

Captain Conder thinks he has identified in this neighbourhood another spot famous in Bible story, the rock

[1] 2 Kings xiv. 8—14. [2] Judg. xiv. 5 ff. [3] Judg. xiv. 19.

Etam, in a cleft or chasm of which—not on its "top"—Samson "hid himself"[1] when hotly pursued by the Philistines. The substitution of B for M by the modern population of Palestine, as in Tibneh for Timneh—is so common, that the name Atab—a hamlet about five miles south-west of Bethshemesh—is thought to be, very probably, a corruption of Etam, especially as the locality exactly suits the details of the Old Testament narrative. Etam means the "Eagle's Nest," and this even the village might well be called, as it lies more than two thousand feet above the sea. There is, besides, a tall cliff of hard limestone, without a handful of arable soil on it, rising up from amidst three ravines, and marked by three small springs bubbling from its foot. In this hill there is a long narrow cavern into which Samson might naturally have "gone down," and which bears the significant name of Hasuta, or "Refuge," the word being Hebrew, not Arabic.[2] It is 250 feet long, eighteen feet wide, and five to eight feet high, with its one end under the centre of the modern village, and its other within sixty yards of the principal spring; the entrance, here, being by a hole in the rock, ten feet deep. In such close proximity to other places associated with Samson's name, such a spot seems to have strong claims to be added to their number.

Half way between Atab and Bethshemesh is another site, very interesting, if Christian tradition dating from the fourth century can be trusted—that of Ebenezer, where Samuel called back the Hebrews from their pursuit of the Philistines, and set up a memorial stone, commemorating the help vouchsafed them by God.[3] Captain Conder thinks it also probable that the Emmaus of the New Testament has been identified by him in this district,

[1] Judg. xv. 8. [2] *Tent Work*, 142. [3] 1 Sam. vii. 12.

in the ruin called Khamasa, about three miles and a half south-east of Atab. This spot has certainly the advantage of being nearly "threescore furlongs from Jerusalem," as Emmaus is said to have been, both by St. Luke and Josephus,[1] and the name is not unlike Emmaus, if the first letter be dropped. The narrow valley in which the ruin lies has copious springs, and gardens shady with the dark green and gold of orange and lemon trees; and the remains of an old Roman road from Jerusalem passes close by. On the western slope stands a modern village, the hill behind which rises bare and rocky, showing ancient tombs cut in it, now used as storehouses. Vespasian, when he left Judæa, settled eight hundred veterans at Emmaus, and if this were the place, it must have been a grateful retreat from the dangers and exposures of war.

Other sites, however, have been regarded as having claims to the dignity of representing Emmaus. The village of Amwas, for example, slightly north-west from Jerusalem, has been thus honoured from a very early period, but it is a hundred and sixty furlongs from Jerusalem, which would make the journey to and from it on the same day quite beyond the distance usually walked at one time by the ancient Jews, the two ways making between them no less than forty miles, which would require at least sixteen hours' walking at the ordinary rate of the country. That it is called Amwas is no proof of its claim, for the name may easily have followed the erroneous identification. "Emmaus" is a corruption of the ancient Hebrew word "Hammath," implying the presence of a hot spring, as Josephus notices, for he says—"Now Emmaus, if it be interpreted, may be rendered 'a warm bath' useful for healing,"[2] and Amwas has

[1] Luke xxiv. 13; Jos., *Bell. Jud.* vii. 6, 6.
[2] Jos., *Bell. Jud.* iv. 1—3; *Ant.* xviii. 2, 3.

in its favour the fact of having been celebrated, in early Christian times, for its healing spring; a local feature still perhaps recognised in the name, "Well of the Plague," applied to a well in the village. But Amwas and Khamasa may fairly claim equal nearness to the Hebrew "Hammath," so that little rests on this detail. But there is a third site for which strong claims have been urged—the village of Kulonieh, which fulfils the condition of being sixty furlongs from Jerusalem. I shall notice it hereafter.

In this region, so thickly sown with Scripture memories, the Palestine Surveyors suppose that they have discovered another site famous in Bible history—Kirjath Jearim, which Captain Conder identifies with a heap of ruins called Khurbet Erma.[1] It is about four miles nearly east of Bethshemesh, but a thousand feet higher above the sea. Approaching it from the east, by the great gorge which, under different names, runs from near Gibeon to Beth-shemesh, and ascending the slopes on which is the little ruined village of Deir-esh-Sheikh, you see the white bed of a torrent far beneath, twisting in wide bends beneath steep hills, which rise fully a thousand feet above it. The slopes on both sides are stony and seamed with outcrops of rock, and both, but especially the southern, are covered with a dense brushwood of dwarfed oak, hawthorn, carob, and other trees, no higher than well-grown shrubs; every vacant space adding to the pleasantness of the view by a carpet of thyme, sage, and other aromatic plants. On a bold spur running out from the southern slope, and marked by a curious platform of rock which rises in the centre, above the olive-trees round, lie the ruins of Erma, built up against scarps, natural or artificial. They have all the appearances of the site of an ancient town, some of

[1] *Palestine Memoirs*, 4to, iii. 43.

the walls showing traces of mortar; others being only rude blocks piled on each other. There is a fine rock-cut wine-press to the east, and on the south a great cistern covered with a large hollowed stone which forms the well-mouth, and looks so old and weathered that it may easily have lain there since the time when David came to the town to bring up the Ark to Jerusalem. There are also rude caves; and the ground is strewn with fragments of ancient pottery. The platform of rock, which is fifty feet one way and thirty the other, rises about ten feet above the ground at its sides, and looks as if it had been artificially levelled; perhaps as the floor of some ancient high place or shrine, once enclosed by walls, of which some large stones still remain, clinging to the scarped sides. Kirjath Jearim was anciently known also as Kirjath Baal:[1] may this raised floor have been that of the high place where the Sun-god was worshipped? David is said to have found the Ark "in Gibeah"—the Hill or Knoll: was this smooth rock the floor of the sanctuary in which it was kept?[2] Certainly it stands on a knoll, and "the house of Abinadab" may have been that of the guardian of the holy place. "Erma" does not seem very like Arim or Jearim, but the consonants—for the vowels are late additions—are the same in both,[3] while the "thickets" or "yaars" from which the town got its name, "Jearim," still clothe the slopes around to a degree rare in Palestine. There are other grounds of identification, but they require too much acquaintance with local details to be useful for popular statement, though their concurrent weight speaks strongly in favour of the site having really been here. In this quiet nook, then, we may think of the Ark as sacredly guarded for twenty years, after the destruction of the men of Bethshemesh for daring to look into it.[4] On

[1] Josh. xv. 60. [2] 1 Sam. vii. 1. [3] יערים [4] 1 Sam. vi. 19.

this platform we may fancy David standing as the sacred chest was brought out from its long seclusion, amidst chants of Levites and the shouts of the multitude.

The view from the ruins is very striking. The valley winds, hither and thither, six or seven hundred feet below; its northern side hollow with caves and scarped into cliffs. Beyond these caves and cliffs the great corn vale of Sorek, in ancient times "The Camp of Dan," reaches away to the west, past all the sites famous in the border history of Judah. From the top of the lofty hill on the north, moreover, one can see how naturally the Ark might have been sent up from the lowlands of Bethshemesh to a place so strongly posted, high in the rough hills.

From Bethshemesh to Artûf, down the slope of Wady Surar and up the side of the opposite Wady Muttûk, the soil varied greatly in its fertility. In one place the grain was thin and stunted; in another, so close and high that it was wearisome to make one's way through it by the narrow path. Near Artûf, indeed, it was more than two feet above the ground, though the season was only the end of March, and we were more than nine hundred feet above the Mediterranean. Yet the soil here was very stony, so that the only explanation of the difference in the crops must have been the later or earlier sowing. There is little system among the peasants, as much as a month, in some cases, intervening between the seed-time of one man and that of his neighbour. There was no water in the deep trench of Wady Sorek, though the late rains had not only filled but overflowed the channel, as might be expected from the great number of side valleys that open on this great central glen. A few days before, the water had been rushing on its way down the upper part of this very strath, and now it was gone; the very ideal of "a deceitful brook," so often used by the prophets as an image

of inconstancy. So Jeremiah thought when, in his despairing weakness, he cried out, "Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? Wilt thou indeed be unto me as a deceitful brook, as waters that fail?"[1] So, too, Job lamented, "My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, as the channels of brooks that pass away; . . . what time they wax warm, they vanish; when it is hot they are consumed out of their place."[2]

Artûf lies on a hill at the mouth of two wadys, north and south of it, that wind with countless side openings throughout Judæa—for it is impossible to say where any wady really ends, so entirely is the country made up of hills and glens, running in every possible direction, like the lines in a brain coral. The hill-sides were very stony, though here and there sown; a few thorn-bushes holding their ground on spots where the rain had not been able to wash away all the soil. The country to the east was very desolate, but many heaps of ruins spoke of thick population in former times. Hills cleft into a wild, rough chaos of peaks rose, in many cases, well-nigh a thousand feet above the narrow ravines between them, offering a very different landscape from the rounded outlines usual in Judæa. From one point, indeed, the eye looked down on the plains, where the high tower of Ramleh was clearly visible. On a hill three hundred feet lower than Zorah, on the other side of a wady, above a grove of olives, lay Eshuah,[3] Samson's home at one time; about a mile from Zorah and Artûf, respectively. The hills on all sides of us were rough with stunted "bush," and abounded in partridges, while the home-like voice of the cuckoo sounded near at hand. At one place some black swine broke

[1] Jer. xv. 18 (R.V.). [2] Job vi. 15—17.
[3] The modern name of the ancient Eshtaol.

out of the cover on the slope, and ran hastily off, for safer shelter, whence, it may be, they sallied, after a time, to seek what they could get in any cultivated land in the neighbourhood, as in the days when "the boar out of the wood wasted the vineyard of Israel, and the wild beast of the field devoured it."[1] The hill-sides as we passed were utterly stony, and could never have been tilled, though occasionally a small island of green showed itself in some hollow, as when we came to the hamlet of Akur, seated in just such a fertile nook, entirely surrounded by high hills. It lies a little off the line of the long Wady Surar, which runs behind it, as a narrow ravine, to the east, still vindicating its name for fruitfulness by a long grove of olives belonging to the village and stretching southwards from it, on the other side of its hill. There was even some rude tillage round the houses, and a few goats browsed on the bare hill-side. Some water still remained in the wady, and there were signs of the stream having recently been from four to six feet deep, and even of its covering the whole bottom of the narrow glen at times. Woe to the traveller caught in such a place in heavy rains. "The waves of death" would soon compass him about.[2] It was often necessary to cross the torrent bed, and as the path must in all ages have been the same in such places, the words of our Lord, "Pray that your flight be not in the winter," came forcibly to mind.[3] Stones, many of them of great size, filled the channel, so that it was hard to get across, while it would have been impossible to advance any distance in the bed itself without great difficulty. Many women and girls passed, carrying on their heads huge bundles of thorns and fagots, for fuel, having come miles to gather them, just as women and girls used to do in ancient times.[4]

[1] Ps. lxxx. 13.
[2] Ps. xviii. 5.
[3] Mark xiii. 18.
[4] Isa. xxvii. 11; Jer. vii. 18.

The strip of country across which we had passed was barren enough, but to the north, over the hills, it was much better, very large olive plantations covering the slopes of not a few valleys. The belt of comparative fruitfulness stretched down to the next village on our course—Ain Karim—which lies beside a confluence of valleys, the hills over which were crowned with hamlets, while the valleys themselves were green with crops, and their slopes fair with waving olive-trees. The exceptional fertility around was, we found, a tribute to Western energy, for a colony of Franciscan monks had long been established at this spot, in the belief that the parents of John the Baptist lived here; and it was their industry, and that which they had roused or paid for in others, that had made things as they were. There is a fine spring, the Spring of the Blessed Mary, to which one goes down by two flights of stone steps, through the roofless arches of an old church. Round it a number of women were gathered, beside an underground arch, washing, or drawing water. There is also a well dedicated to Zacharias and Elizabeth, the water of which is raised by the unusual aid of a rope and pulley. Old walls and arches mark this spot also, but in the village new houses were actually being built; a strange sight in Palestine. The large monastery built in honour of John the Baptist has a very fine position on a low, isolated hill, surrounded by others much higher. From the west it looks like a mediæval castle; its strong, castellated wall, enclosing a wide circuit, supports the illusion, though, outside, everything is of the ordinary local type. For centuries the church built over the place where tradition alleges the Baptist to have been born, had been used by the Mahommedans as a cowshed and sheepfold, but it was regained by that pious monarch, Louis XIV. of France,

for the Franciscans, and has since then been elaborately restored. The Greek Church sends its pilgrims to Jutta, near Hebron, as the place where St. John saw the light; the Latin Church patronises Ain Karim. But the Greek locality has far the better claims to honour.

Climbing the hill on which the village lies, we saw the white domes of the Russian Hospice at Jerusalem rising unexpectedly before us, though the city itself was still hidden by intervening hills. To the west, the eye ranges down valley beyond valley, to the Mediterranean, for Ain Karim is more than two thousand feet above the sea, and thus from the same point one could see to the gates of Jerusalem on the one hand, and to the great sea on the other. The village of Kolonieh, which lies about two miles north of Ain Karim, is reached through a charming valley sprinkled with olives, the gift of springs flowing from the hill-sides. It has been thought by some to be the Emmaus of the New Testament, the name, as is supposed, having been changed to Colonia after Vespasian had settled a number of his veterans in the neighbourhood, though the Talmud simply tells us that it was a "colonia," or place free from taxes. It lies on the treeless side of a hill, but has, for Judæa, a very beautiful appearance, amidst the sweet refreshment of green patches of grain that surround it. The windings of the wady prevent any distant views, but heighten so much the more a feeling of happy seclusion. The slopes and bottom of the little valley on which the village looks down are planted with olive-trees, for, though the wady is dry as a whole in summer, a spring of clear water bubbles up from among the rocks at one spot, and runs all the year, spreading rich vegetation around. Thick clusters of almond, pomegranate, fig, and orange, with rich shade and delightful fragrance, attract one to it, as it ripples over its stony bed. Fig-trees, with

vines growing through their branches, are not wanting, and must make delightful arbours in summer, when the shoots stretch from tree to tree. No wonder that a place so attractive is said to have been the scene of a strange festival on the Day of Atonement; the girls of Jerusalem coming out to meet the young men who were celebrating their absolution from the sins of the past year, and rejoicing before them in merry dances, not without a view, one may suppose, to subsequent matrimonial results. No wonder that such a meeting was so pleasant as to be renewed half-yearly, the twelve months' delay for the "atonement" taxing patience too severely. Remains of strong walls of large bevelled stones, one of them more than five feet long and two feet broad, are found in the little glen, and part of the channel of the spring, made into a plastered tank, which still holds water, had the top of a pillar lying near it. No place near Jerusalem has charms which were more likely to have made it a favourite haunt of the citizens from the earliest times. The spring, the watered gardens, the orchards, with their varied green and their different blossoms, the terraces along the slopes, with their vines and their alleys of olives, unite to make it an idyllic home. Was it to this place that the two disciples came, accompanied by their unrecognised Master, and could it be that in some humble room in the village, as it then was, He made Himself known to them, and then vanished from their sight?[1] So some think; yet Kolonieh does not meet the requirements of distance from Jerusalem, from which it is less than four miles off, while Emmaus was nearly eight. It seems, therefore, as if Captain Conder's identification of Khamasa as the site has more to be said in its favour.

An old, almost ruinous, bridge of four arches, the

[1] Luke xxiv. 31.

centre ones a patchwork of beams, the masonry having long fallen, spans the channel in which the winter rains flow off; showing a great bed of stones for most of the year, but wild enough when the "rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow."[1]

Leaving the village, the road towards Jerusalem is, as hitherto, a continual climbing and descent, for the country is nothing but a succession of great land-waves; the view from the higher summits showing hill beyond hill, nearly all frightfully barren and stony, though nearer the city tillage is more frequent. In such spots of cultivation, as at Hebron and elsewhere, a part of the thousands of tons of loose stones, strewn everywhere, is gathered into dry walls, which protect the enclosures thus redeemed from desolation.

The land round Jerusalem, and in the south of Palestine generally, except on the plains, is held in permanent ownership; but in the north, and in the Philistine country, each cultivator has so much land assigned him, at fixed intervals of a year or two, the amount being measured by a cord of a certain length, and determined by the size of his family and the acreage he can work. This system must be very ancient, for it was thus that the land was distributed at first among the Hebrews, their "inheritance" being then "divided to them by line;"[2] and it was the custom also of other nations, for the kingdom of Samaria was to be "divided by line" among the Assyrians,[3] and the ruin of Judah is painted in its deepest colour by Micah, in the fatal words, "Thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot [for thee] in the congregation of the Lord."[4] In such a subdivision it is of great moment where one's ground may be assigned, the

[1] Matt. vii. 25. [2] Ps. lxxviii. 55. [3] Amos vii. 17.
[4] Micah ii. 5; Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, iv. 355.

change of temporary ownership leaving everything undecided in each case. The "lines may fall" to him in a place far from his dwelling, so that it will take hours to reach it in the morning, or return from it at night; or they may fall on a bare, rocky spot, where his utmost toil will be unproductive. To secure fairness, all is decided by lot, and thus, if unlucky one year, the peasant bears his disappointment, in the hope that the next drawing may be more fortunate. The Psalmist speaks of the happiness of his position in words he must often have heard from those who, in the division of the ground, had been so favoured: he rejoices that "his lines have fallen to him in pleasant places"[1]—perhaps on a gentle slope of rich soil, near the well or fountain, and not far from his home.

Landmarks to indicate the limits of each man's ground are very simple matters in the East. In Galilee I have seen portion after portion marked by an ordinary stone of moderate size, laid at each corner; nor will anyone think of removing even so slight a boundary. To do so would not only be unlucky, but the most abhorred of crimes.[2] It is interesting, however, to notice the strange way in which the land is divided in some places. Frontage on the road being especially desirable, only a small breadth of it can be allowed to each man—a half-line, or perhaps two lines—while the strip seems to run back almost indefinitely, so that a farm may be a rod or two wide, and two or three miles deep; very much as it is in America, where a small piece of river frontage has a great stretch of land behind it to make up the "lot." But, narrow as the strips are, especially in northern Palestine

[1] Ps. xvi. 6.

[2] Deut. xix. 14; xxvii. 17; Job xxiv. 2; Prov. xxii. 28; xxiii. 10. The word translated "landmark" in the A.V. means in Hebrew the cord by which the land is measured.

and Syria, they are religiously honoured; the peasant, in ploughing time, starting in the old furrow with the greatest care, along his line of a mile or two. How long it is, in any given case, few but the man himself know, for it is a sore trial to patience to wait till the small, slow oxen have gone to the end of the almost interminable furrow. A friend in Beyrout, indeed, told me that he had never been able to wait till the cattle turned, though he could not help admiring the straightness of the lines for so great a distance. In the rich plains of Lebanon it matters little where one's lines may fall, but it was very different with David in a district like that round Bethlehem, where he might either have a strip of the fertile valley, or a belt of stony hill-side.

I was reminded in Jerusalem, by the use of salt in the baptismal service of the Greek church, of the wonderful tenacity with which Orientals continue the customs of their ancestors, even in trifling details. Ezekiel, it will be remembered, speaks of Jerusalem as an infant that "was not salted at all;"[1] an expression not easily understood till it is known that in Syria and Palestine it is still the custom to "salt" infants. Common coarse salt is pulverised in a mortar when the child is born; and as soon as the poor little creature is washed, it is covered all over with it and wrapped up, like a mummy, in swaddling clothes. This process is repeated daily for three days. In some places, they are humane enough to melt the salt and bathe the infant with the brine. After the third day the child is bathed in oil, and then washed and dressed as usual. A native mother cannot imagine how European children are not thus favoured. "Poor thing," she will say, "it was not salted at all!"

[1] Ezek. xvi. 4.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

NORTHWARDS.

Before finally leaving Jerusalem I was glad to find that Protestant energy was doing so much for the community. Besides the English school for boys, with its sixty children and thirteen lads, there is, as I have said, an English school for girls, with seventy names on the books. The German Orphanage, moreover, cares for a hundred boys, and the Kaiserwerth Deaconesses have two hundred girls under their wise and loving charge. In addition to these, the Latin, Greek, and Armenian communities have schools of their own. It must be difficult, however, to spread Christianity under a government which prohibits Moslem children from attending foreign instruction. The Turk, indeed, wherever he can, tries, under one pretext or another, to hinder all English evangelical work, though the firmer attitude of France and Germany forces him to be more chary of interfering with the religious or benevolent enterprises undertaken by members of these nationalities. But alike at Joppa, Gaza, Bethlehem, and Nazareth, everything English is virtually proscribed by the government; and I have found, since my return, that it seems hopeless to expect such energetic action from our officials at the Foreign Office as marks the Foreign Offices of Berlin and Paris, and secures their missions and hospitals in the Holy Land from the vexatious opposition encountered at every step by ours. We may talk of our greatness abroad,

but it is only in our own dependencies. In the Turkish Empire, at least, our Government is a byword for pusillanimous and unmanly neglect of its subjects and their interests.

The road to Anathoth, or, as it is now called, Anata, starts at the Damascus Gate, from which you go under the shadow of the city walls to the north-east corner, at St. Stephen's Gate, and descend to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Peasants and townsfolk were already astir when we set out, for Orientals begin the day early. On the road up Mount Scopus there were quarries on the left, in which men were working. Ploughs were going slowly in the hollow of the valley, and women with great baskets of cauliflowers on their heads were coming down the hills from the villages beyond, to market. Looking around from the lofty vantage-ground of the summit, a magnificent panorama presents itself. To the east, one sees the deep blue of the Dead Sea, the pink mountains of Moab—in many shades, lighter and darker, along their deeply furrowed range, which stretches on like a table-land —and the "circle" of the Jordan, with its patches of green; then, sweeping northward, the Valley of the Acacias, where Israel encamped, the waters of Nimrim, the gorge of the Jabbok, and the hills of Gilead, are seen. The top of Scopus is famous as the point from which invaders have again and again looked down on the Holy City. It was apparently on this broad summit that Alexander the Great, coming up from Antipatris in the plains of Sharon, was met by the high priest Jaddua, clad in his pontifical robes, and advancing at the head of a long procession of Jewish dignitaries. It was from this point, also, that Titus looked down on the great walls and glittering splendour of the Temple; and it was on this bare brow of stone that the first Crusaders sank on their knees to bless God

that they were so close to Jerusalem, though they were so nearly spent by the fierce heat and the want of supplies that men and beasts died in multitudes from the dearth of food and water. The yellow hills of Quarantania—the supposed scene of our Lord's forty days' fast—stand far below, shutting out the sight of Jericho, which lies behind them, while at right angles to them the brown valleys of Judah rise in a constant ascent to those around the hill on which we stand. To the south, the white domes of Jerusalem shine in the light, and the long grey line of battlemented wall holds, as in a girdle, the open space of Omar, the houses of the city, and the high dome of its great church, beyond which the cone of Herodium, and the wild, confused hills of the wilderness of Judæa, rise as a background. The slopes of Scopus, and the hills around, were green with patches of barley, but as a whole the country maintains its character of desolation, for there are no trees, and the hill-sides are mostly bare grey stone, split by the sun and rain of ages.

A mile and a quarter, or thereabouts, from Jerusalem, hidden in a narrow, fruitful valley, lay the hamlet of Isawiyeh, wheat and corn covering the slopes above it, and prickly-pear hedges fencing its large beds of cauliflower. Here and there the white-red blossom of the almond shone out between the silver-grey leaves of the olive and the darker green of the carob-tree, clumps of which grew at different points. Hills, with many rock cisterns in them, rose all around, except to the east, through an opening in which direction the Dead Sea was visible, so that it was not surprising to find that a path led from the hamlet to the Jordan, the peasants speaking of the river as five hours distant.

"Isawiyeh" means "The Village of Jesus"; and it is quite likely that our Lord often stopped at it on His

journeys to Jerusalem. It has, further, been thought to be the ancient Nob, where the Tabernacle was pitched for a long time, but opinion is very undecided on the matter. "Nob" means "a high place," and was, apparently, in sight of Jerusalem;[1] but Isawiyeh is shut out from the view of the city by intervening hills, and it does not answer to a "high place," for it is in a valley. A rival to Isawiyeh has been found by some in the village of Shafat, about a mile and a half to the north-west, owing its name to a contraction of Jehoshaphat, which was used in full so late as the fourteenth century. Its features are simple. A ruined saint's tomb, with a low dome still rising over falling walls, and a few pieces of ancient buildings, are the only notable things, unless it be two or three fig- and other fruit-trees growing at the tomb. Bare sheets of rock, scanty pasture for goats, and stony uplands, complete the picture. Dean Stanley fancied that Nob might have stood on the northernmost of the three summits of the Mount of Olives,[2] while Professor Mühlau transfers it to the village of Beit Nuba, about fourteen miles almost west of Jerusalem, the most improbable site of all. Supposing Nob to have been either at Shafat or at Isawiyeh, memories of great interest cling to these spots, for at Nob, the priest's city,[3] the Tabernacle, though the Ark was not with it, stood in the time of Saul, with Abimelech for high priest.[4] Hither David came in his flight from Saul, and received the shewbread from the friendly priest to sustain him, nothing else being within his reach in the fierce haste, and was girt with the sword of Goliath, which had been preserved in the holy place as a sacred national relic. The ruin of Nob dated, it would seem, from this time, Saul taking a fierce revenge on both town and

[1] Isa. x. 32.
[2] *Sinai and Palestine*, 184.
[3] 1 Sam. xxii. 19.
[4] 1 Sam. xxi. 1; Matt. xii. 3; Luke vi. 3.

priests for the kindness shown to his rival. Jerome expressly says that Jerusalem could be seen from Nob; and in this respect Shafat suits as to position.

The road to Anathoth from Isawiyeh is over rough hills and valleys, wild and desolate. Black goats browsed on the scanty herbage growing between the thickly sown stones. A shepherd-boy guided them, and recalled any that strayed by well-aimed pebbles from his sling, as, no doubt, had often been done by David.[1] The life of a herd-boy is a hard one on these bare hills and in these barren valleys, where no shade can be found. "In the day the heat consumes him, and the frost by night," as Jacob said of a similar life in Mesopotamia.[2] Jeremiah must often have passed over this bare track after his nation had been swept away to Babylon, when the sheep, cattle, and goats had been driven with them from the hills; and he must have felt the bitterness of the change when the pipe of the shepherd no longer sounded from the field, and no life cheered him where it had formerly abounded. How natural that in his anticipations of the happy days after the Return, he should picture in his mind that "again in this place, which is desolate, without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be an habitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down, or pass again under the hands of him that telleth them."[3]

Anathoth, the birthplace of Jeremiah, is a small village lying on the top of a low hill, which is fretted over, in part, with loose stone walls protecting little or nothing, and of course in a very poor condition, like everything in Palestine, so far as I have seen, except the buildings of Bethlehem and its neighbourhood, which are Christian. A few olive-trees grow in scattered clumps on the plain below the village, but otherwise there are no

[1] 1 Sam. xvii. 40. [2] Gen. xxxi. 40. [3] Jer. xxxiii. 12, 13.

trees in the landscape. It was a "town" of Benjamin, and was resettled after the Captivity, so that the solitude which grieved the prophet passed away after his death. Pillar-shafts, built into some of the walls, speak of mediæval structures—probably churches and other ecclesiastical buildings; indeed, the tesselated pavement of a church was recently discovered on the western side of the hamlet. The view from any of the housetops is wonderfully interesting in historical memories. The famous heights of Benjamin, Gibeah of Saul, Ramah, Geba, and others, rise in a lovely panorama round the prophet's home. Here he spent his youth and the first two years of his great office, till the hostility of his fellow-villagers threatened his life and forced him to betake himself to Jerusalem.[1] The Holy City is hidden by the rising ground on the south and west, but to the east and north long sharp ridges of chalk, dotted with knolls which fleck the slopes with shadow, stretch away into the distance. To the west the hills are rounded instead of sharp; their harder limestone weathering thus under the sky and rain, instead of being washed away into sierras like the softer beds. Jeremiah must often have looked down the long ravines which sink one below another to the plains of the Jordan, beyond which the mountains of Moab, east of the river, stand up against the sky, and over the blue Sea of Death, washing the foot of these hills, and brightening the whole landscape by its contrast with the prevailing yellow or brown. He had before him, also, close at hand, a soft green hollow between his village and the high northern side of Wady Saleim, to refresh his eyes and heart in the midst of the dry and rocky prospect around. The neighbourhood must have been equally familiar to Jeremiah's great predecessor Isaiah, for no one who did not know the ground thoroughly

[1] Jer. i. 1; xxix. 27; xi. 21.

could have painted the advance of the Assyrian army against Jerusalem with the local touches which he gives. "He is come to Aiath [or Ai]; he is passed through Migron; at Michmash he layeth up his baggage; they are gone through the pass; they have taken up their lodging at Geba; Ramah trembleth; Gibeah of Saul is fled. Cry aloud with thy voice, O daughter of Gallim! hearken, O Laishah! O thou poor Anathoth! Madmenah is a fugitive; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. This very day shall he halt at Nob; he shaketh his hand at the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem."[1]

Two women were busy in a cottage at the household mill, which attracted me by its sound.[2] I have previously described the simple stones with which the flour of the family is daily prepared, but it was striking to see so vivid an illustration of the words of our Lord, that at His sudden and unexpected appearance, when He comes again, "two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left."[3] To grind is very exhausting work, so that, where possible, one woman sits opposite the other, to divide the strain, though in a poor man's house his wife has to do this drudgery unaided. It is pleasant to remember that under the humane law of Moses the millstones of a household could not be seized by a creditor; the doing so was to take "a man's life in pledge."[4] Anathoth is 2,225 feet above the sea.

Shafat, which may be the site of Nob, lies, as I have said, between two and three miles west of Anathoth, over a rough, up-and-down country, but there is a stretch of flat land to the south of it. The strange conical hill Tell el Fûl, 2,750 feet high, rises behind this level, with a

[1] Isa. x. 31—32 (R.V.).
[2] Jer. xxv. 10 Rev. xviii. 22; Eccles. xii. 4.
[3] Matt. xxiv. 41.
[4] Deut. xxiv. 6.

mysterious mound on its top, which excavation has shown to have been originally an artificial platform, supported by rough walls with steps leading up to it, or, perhaps, by a lower platform surrounding it. When it was raised no one knows, but as it is visible from Jerusalem and all the villages far and near, it may have been used for a beacon, to give the alarm in war, or to announce the rise of the new moon in times of peace. There are no traces of any other buildings. The eye ranges over Anathoth and Isawiyeh, and down to the deep gorge of the Jordan, which looks specially beautiful from this point. On the south-east lie the waters of the Dead Sea, apparently as calm, in their deep blue, as the heaven above; and beyond them, of course, are the mountains of Moab. To the north lie Ramah and the hill of Geba, while to the west and south are, successively, Gibeon, the stately height of Mizpeh or Neby Samwil—the queen among the heights of Benjamin—and, in all its romantic beauty, the Holy City, with its roofs and domes, its towers and minarets.

Tell el Fûl has been very generally believed to be the site of the ancient town known as Gibeah of Benjamin,[1] from its lying in the territory of that tribe, or as Gibeah of Saul, because that king belonged to it,[2] or as Gibeah of God, probably from an old sacrificial high place being near or on it.[3] Captain Conder supposes that the name of Gibeah was attached to a small district reaching towards Michmash, but the town itself would certainly be on a height. If this be so, Tell el Fûl is associated with a very dark chapter of Old Testament history. Just as, at this time, many travellers, men and women, riding or on foot, pass

[1] 1 Sam. xiii. 2; xiv. 16.
[2] 1 Sam. xv. 34; 2 Sam. xxi. 6; 1 Sam. xi. 4.
[3] 1 Sam. x. 5, 13.

to and fro along the road immediately beneath it, a poor Levite journeyed on from Bethlehem with his wife three thousand years ago, late in the evening. He was making for the hill-country of Ephraim, but turned aside to rest in Gibeah for the night, as the sun was nearly setting. No one appeared, however, to give them shelter, so that the two sat down in the open space in the middle of the town, to spend the night in the open air, if hospitality were finally refused them. "And, behold, there came an old man from his work, out of the field, at even, and he lifted up his eyes, and saw the wayfaring man in the open place of the city; and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou? And he said unto him, We are passing from Bethlehem-Judah into the farther side of the hill-country of Ephraim; from thence I am, and I went to Bethlehem-Judah, and I am now going home,[1] and there is no man that taketh me into his house. Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses, and there is bread and wine also for me, and for thy handmaid, and for the young man which is with thy servants: there is no want of anything. And the old man said, Peace be unto thee; howsoever, let all thy wants lie upon me; only lodge not in the street. So he brought him into his house, and gave the asses fodder, and they washed their feet and did eat and drink."[2] But in the night the worthless ones of Gibeah committed a frightful crime against the defenceless strangers, the terrible punishment of which, by the tribes at large, nearly exterminated the whole clan of Benjamin.[3] Here, in later times, the peasant king, Saul, had his dwelling, near which rose a tamarisk, under whose shade he used to rest.[4] Here also, sitting by the wall of this rude palace, he held a feast

[1] Sept.
[2] Judg. xix. 16—21.
[3] Judg. xx. 35.
[4] 1 Sam. xxii. 6.

every new moon, with his favourite companions in arms.[1] But the spot is memorable, besides, as the place where David gave up to the Gibeonites, to be put to death, the two sons of Saul, whom Rizpah, one of the dead king's wives, had borne to him, and the five sons of Saul's daughter, Merab, borne to Adriel, the husband to whom she was given by her father after having been promised to David;[2] and the Gibeonites "hanged them on the hill before the Lord," or, rather, stuck up their bodies on posts, after the poor men had been put to death. "Then," we are told, the unfortunate "Rizpah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water was poured upon them from heaven"—from the end of May till late in the year—and she suffered neither the birds of the air—the hateful vultures—to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field [to devour them] by night;[3] till, at last, David heard of her broken-hearted love, and had the bones gathered and laid honourably in the rock tomb of the family, along with the bones of Saul and Jonathan, brought from their grave at Jabesh Gilead for interment in the ancestral resting-place.

Across the plain stretching for some miles north and south, on the west side of Tell el Fûl, and about a mile in breadth, with rolling land in its centre, lies the village of Bet Hannina, at the foot of Neby Samwil, which is the loftiest hill in Central Palestine, and, apparently, famous as the Mizpeh of ancient Hebrew story. It is a long, slow ascent to its top, over a succession of swells dotted with olives after passing Bet Hannina, a loose stone wall appearing now and then, though, for the most part, the hill is in a state of nature, with so little green that one may call it treeless and untouched by man. A path, at times, between stone walls, neglected

[1] 1 Sam. xx. 5—25. [2] 1 Sam. xviii. 19. [3] 2 Sam. xxi. 9.

for who knows how many generations, leads to the summit.

Though the soil is exceptionally fertile, the district has so few inhabitants that even the choicest spots lie desolate. The top of the hill is 2,935 feet above the sea, and is seen from every part of the neighbouring country, towering over a host of lower summits. A mosque with a slender minaret—once a church of the Crusaders, and still showing the form of a cross—crowns its utmost height, covering the supposed tomb of the prophet Samuel. A number of olive-trees grow beside it, but there is also an abundance of huge stones—remains of ancient walls—and a plentiful display of the worthless thorns and rank weeds everywhere so common. Captain Conder thinks that Mizpeh has yet to be identified, and Sir George Grove would recognise it in Mount Scopus, close to Jerusalem; but tradition and general consent assign it to the top of this commanding hill. The word means a "watch-height," and Neby Samwil, so named after the "prophet Samuel," is such a "look-out" as cannot be found elsewhere in Palestine. A beacon fire on it would be seen over a very wide district. The view is, indeed, the most extensive in the country. Rugged valleys, roughened still more by scrub, with olives rising at some clear spots, and patches of corn looking out in soft green between stretches of thorns or loose stones, lay sinking, wave beyond wave, at my feet; the very picture of such places as our Lord had in His thoughts when He spoke the parable of the sower, with its good soil, its paths through the corn, its rocky stretches, and its tangles of thorns.[1] A mile off, on the north, rose the hill El Jib—the ancient Gibeon of Benjamin; its limestone beds jutting out horizontally, in broad bands up

[1] Matt. xiii. 2–8.

to the top; the softer material between each layer having, more or less, been washed away. Five miles further off, in the same direction, high on its hill, rose El Bireh—the ancient Beeroth—2,820 feet above the sea, and beyond it, Rûmmon, east of Bethel—the ancient "Rock Rimmon"—2,500 feet above the sea-level. Lifting your eyes still farther northwards and westwards, the top of Mount Gerizim and the shoulder of Carmel are seen. Er Ram—the Ramah of Benjamin—and Jeba—the ancient Geba—lie three or four miles off, almost to the east, though a little north as well. Looking down the depths of the ever-descending western wadys, and through the opening in the hills, the plains of Sharon and Philistia were visible, with the sea beyond them. To the south, beyond a welter of grey hills, I had another sight of the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem, with its mosques and domes, far below the height from which I looked at them. Eastward, beyond the gorge of the Jordan, which lies too low to be seen, rose the mountains of Gilead and Moab. A glass showed the distant fortress of Kerak—the ancient Kir Moab—and the hill of Sihn, the highest in Moab, and the distant mountains of Gilead. The hills immediately round Neby Samwil are all softly rounded, not steep, rising gently for the most part, and offering every facility for terrace cultivation, to their very tops. In the valleys to the north-west were a few vineyards, with ruinous watch-towers among them. A shepherd lad was leading out his flock of black goats from the village of a dozen poor huts, close by, on the hill-top, using the peculiar cry of his craft. The mosque beside us was in ruins, and served, in part, for a granary; its pointed arches reminding one that it had once been a Christian church. Outside the huts were two tanks hewn in the rock, one with, the other without, water; memorials of a large community, long since passed away. A hollow in

the rocks a short distance below me was filled with a clear flowing spring; but instead of the old well-to-do Mizpeh, only some wretched hovels made in holes in the limestone were to be seen, with a few others built up, in part, of the materials of fine ancient structures. The ground was very stony and barren, but on the left, in the valley deep below, were fair olive-groves and green fields. A steep footpath led down to Bet Hannina, shaded by vines and fig-trees, mingled with olives and almond-trees. Towards Jerusalem, the prospect over the hills was frightfully barren, as if the curse which the Israelites once inflicted on Moab had fallen on this part of their own land, where "they beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone, and filled it, and stopped all the wells of water, and felled all the good trees."[1]

On this lofty hill the tribes of Israel assembled in their thousands to determine what punishment should be meted out to the Benjamites for their hideous wickedness towards the wife of the Levite.[2] Here also they gathered, at the summons of Samuel, during the worst times of Philistine oppression, and after a public confession of their sins, were sent forth to victory and deliverance.[3] It was on Mizpeh that they met, once more, for the momentous choice of a king, ending in the election of Saul to the great office, amidst loud cries, then first heard in the nation, of "God save the king!"[4] One of the three holy cities[5] which Samuel visited in turn, as judge, stood on its now deserted slopes, or on its summit. Here Jeremiah lived, with the small body of his people who had escaped from being led off to Babylon, after the destruction of

[1] 2 Kings iii. 25.
[2] Judg. xxi. 1, 3, 5, 8. See p. 162.
[3] 1 Sam. vii. 5—13.
[4] 1 Sam. x. 17—25.
[5] Sept.

Jerusalem.[1] During the Captivity it was the seat of the Chaldean governor. Here the Crusaders caught their first sight of the Holy City, calling the hill Mount Joy, "because it gives joy to pilgrims' hearts, for from that place men first see Jerusalem." On this very height, in fine, Richard the Lionhearted fell on his knees, and, covering his face with his hands, refused to gaze on the city of his Lord's humiliation and death, desecrated as it was by the infidel, crying out, "Ah, Lord God, I pray that I may never see the Holy City if I may not rescue it from the hands of Thine enemies."

El Jib—the ancient Gibeon—is reached by a path leading down from Neby Samwil. Watercourses run, apparently, in every direction, but they all, in the end, find their way to the plain of Sharon, for El Jib, like Neby Samwil, stands on the west side of the watershed of the country. The flat, natural terraces, formed tier above tier by the ring-like beds of limestone which jut out, were fairly tilled, and sprinkled with figs, pomegranates, and olives, but the village on the top had only from forty to fifty scattered hovels. Yet no spot is more clearly identified with stirring incidents in Bible history. It was once a great Amorite or Hivite city,[2] and its people were the only part of the old inhabitants left alive by Joshua. That they were spared was due to their skilful diplomacy,[3] though they were made slaves of the Tabernacle and afterwards of the Temple, drawing water and hewing wood, under the name of Nethinim—"The Given," or "Devoted." In later times, Saul's half-heathen zeal led him to massacre many of this pagan remnant, but his children had to suffer a bloody reprisal, seven of his sons being given over to the Gibeonites by David, to put to death in atonement for their father's crime, as the story of Rizpah has reminded us.[4] On the

[1] Jer. xl. 6. [2] Josh. ix. 7; xi. 19; 2 Sam. xxi. 2. [3] Josh. ix. [4] 2 Sam. xxi.

waste stretch between Gibeon and Ramah, the battle was fought in which Joshua broke the power of the allied kings of the Amorites, or "hill-men," and secured possession of Central Palestine.[1] The "Pool of Gibeon," where David and his men faced Abner and the adherents of Ishbosheth, in the very heart of Saul's own district, is still to be seen below the east end of the hill—a great, right-angled tank of strong masonry, twenty-four paces long and fourteen broad, lying mostly in ruins, and no longer holding water. Indeed, its bottom is sown with grain, for the noble spring which once fed it, rushing from a deep pool in the rock, now runs past unused. On the opposite sides of this sat the two bands, facing each other, till twelve from each side rose to prove their mettle, and began a fight in which the whole twenty-four fell dead. Here, beside this old tank, they lay in their blood that afternoon, giving to the spot the name of "The Field of the Strong Men;"[2] still virtually preserved in that by which it is now known, "The Valley of the Fighters." Near this, "by the great stone that was in Gibeon," Joab, ever faithful to David, but faithless to all others, basely murdered Amasa, his rival, who "wallowed in his blood, in the midst of the highway;" his murderer standing by, red with blood from the girdle to the sandals.[3] On this hill stood the "great high place"—that is, the Old Tabernacle—at which Solomon offered huge sacrifices, and had his famous vision,[4] and here he caused Joab to be killed as the poor grey-headed veteran, justly overtaken by vengeance at last, clung to the horns of the altar.[5] Beside the "great waters" of this tank, moreover, Jeremiah and the band with him were set free from the chains of the

[1] Josh. x.
[2] 2 Sam. ii. 16.
[3] 2 Sam. xx. 10; 1 Kings ii. 5.
[4] 1 Kings iii. 4, 5 ff.
[5] 1 Kings ii. 28.

Chaldeans; and here, also, Johanan overtook Ishmael, the murderer of Gedaliah and, through this insane piece of villainy, the final destroyer of Judah.[1] Strange events these solitary slopes have seen! Uninviting though the prospect around may now be, but for a few gnarled and twisted olive-trees, the marks of ancient terraces on every height speak of long-past days, when a teeming population redeemed the landscape from barrenness, and filled it with the hum of busy life.

From the top of the hill, the ridge on which stood Ramah and Gibeah of Saul rises a few miles off. An olive plantation covers the south-west slope, and the broad wadys north, east, and west were fairly tilled, black patches of newly ploughed land alternating with the green of rising crops. The eastern slope, which boasts of some vines, figs, and olives, is watered by several springs, one of them the abundant stream that once filled the great tank.

To get to Er Ram you cross a tract of rolling land, about three miles broad, to the east of this point, passing a heap which marks Adaseh, one of the battle-fields of Judas Maccabæus, where he defeated Nicanor. The hills on the way are low, and gentle in their swell, like the waves of the sea when it is sinking to rest after a storm. In the hollows between them, green sometimes relieved the yellow monotony of the landscape, but the view as a whole was tame and dull. Before we reached Er Ram, two Roman milestones, still in position, showed us that this was the old military highway towards the pass of Michmash, the key of Central Palestine. The road to Nablus runs a little west of Er Ram, in the plain below the hills, but must have been commanded by any fortress erected at Ramah. It was for this reason, doubtless, that

[1] Jer. xli. 12.

the truculent Baasha, king of Israel, fortified that post, causing such danger to Jerusalem by doing so that Asa was glad to invoke the aid of Syria to force him to retire from it, and proceeded at once to dismantle the stronghold of his enemy when it was captured, carrying off the stones and timber to fortify his own frontier towns or villages of Geba and Mizpeh.[1] The hill rises high in isolation above the neighbouring ground, but has now only a wretched village on it, with the ruins of an old Crusaders' church, and of a tower, the foundations of which may be very ancient. Half way up the ascent were the remains of a small temple, or perhaps khan, beside a dry tank, the roof of which had once been supported by six pillars, with plain capitals. The hovels of the village itself spoke of better days in the past, for bevelled stones looked out from the walls of some, and in the little yard of another was a short, slender pillar. Ruins abounded in the neighbourhood, as you cast your eye over it, and everything spoke of a glory long departed. It was here—at the frontier town of Benjamin—that the Chaldeans collected their prisoners, before marching them off through the pass of Michmash to Babylon; a circumstance used by Jeremiah with the finest effect, when he supposes the spirit of Rachel, the mother of the tribe, to have left her tomb by the wayside, near Bethel, to grieve in mid-air over the unreturning throng. "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not."[2]

Geba lies about two miles nearly east of Ramah, on a separate hill of the same small chain; a poor, half-ruinous village, once a town of the priests;[3] now, having nothing

[1] 1 Kings xv. 17—22; 2 Chron. xvi. 1 ff. [2] Jer. xxxi. 15.
[3] Josh. xviii. 24; xxi. 17.

sacred but a saint's tomb, as ruined as all else. From this, the way rose very steep, up a stony, desolate ascent; not too barren, however, for some sheep and goats to browse among the stones. About half way between Jeba, or Geba, and Mukhmas, the ancient Michmash, but to the east of a straight line from one to the other, the famous pass begins, through the Wady Suweinit, "The Valley of the Little Thorn-tree, or Acacia," to Jericho; in ancient times the main road from the east to the hill-country of Central Palestine. Michmash, which is famous in one of the most romantic episodes of Old Testament history, lay less than a mile due north from the point where the wady, running south-east, contracts into a fissure through the hills, the sides in some places precipitous, and very near each other; in most parts eaten away above, so that the cliffs form slightly receding slopes instead of precipices, with a comparatively broad bottom below; the wady, however, still preserving its character of a gorge, rather than of a valley. The whole way, from near Michmash till it opens on the Jordan plains, behind the modern Jericho, where it is known as the Wady Kelt, is thus a narrow sunken pass, with towering walls or grim roughened slopes of rock on each side, in some places 800 feet high, and, throughout, only far enough asunder at any part below to allow of the passage of a small body of men abreast. The whole length of this gorge, including its doublings and windings, is about twelve miles, but in that distance it sinks from a height of 2,040 feet above the sea, near Michmash, to about 400 feet below it, where it opens on the Jordan slope—a fall of more than 2,400 feet.

The village of Mukhmas lies on a broad saddle, more than 600 feet below Ramah, and 230 feet below Geba, which is about a mile and a half west of the chasm of

El Suweinit. The ground, sloping gently from Michmash towards Ai and Bethel, is still very generally used for growing barley, and was anciently so famous for this grain that the Jewish equivalent of our proverb, "to take coals to Newcastle," is "to take barley to Michmash." A fine brook flows down the valley on the north, bordered by numbers of small but well-proportioned oak-trees, from which I had the pleasure of gathering some mistletoe, the branches being richly festooned with it. A chasm to the south of the village, though less than a mile off, is not seen from it, and, indeed, only a very small glimpse of it is to be had from any part till you are close on the brink; a narrow spur of the hills concealing it on the north, and flat ground reaching to its edge on the south. I was greatly interested in the locality, as that of the adventure of Jonathan and his armour-bearer,[1] which not only charms by its audacity, but was of vital importance in Hebrew history. The identification of its scene is fortunately easy.

Josephus describes very minutely the position of the Philistine camp which Jonathan assailed. It was, he says, a cliff with three heads, ending in a long, sharp tongue, and protected by surrounding precipices; and such a natural stronghold is found close to Michmash, on the east; the peasantry giving it, even now, the name of "The Fort." A ridge stands up in three round knolls, over a perpendicular crag, ending in a narrow tongue to the east, with cliffs below it; the slope of the valley falling off behind, and the ground rising, to the west, towards Michmash. Opposite this "fort," to the south, a crag rises up to about the same height—from fifty to sixty feet—so steep as, apparently, to forbid an attempt to climb it; the two sides answering exactly to the description in

[1] 1 Sam. xiv.

Samuel: "a rocky crag on the one side, and a rocky crag on the other side."[1] These two crags, in the Hebrew Bible, are called Bozez and Seneh—"The Shining," and "The Thorn" or "Acacia," respectively[2]—names still applicable when we see them. Seneh, "The Thorn," survives in "Suweinit," the name of the wady; Bozez, "The Shining," explains itself at once on the spot. The two crags face each other, from the east and west respectively, so that one is nearly always in shade, while the other is equally favoured by sunshine. Even the colour of the cliffs has been affected by this; the shady side being dark, while that which has always been exposed to the glare of the light is tawny beneath and white towards the top. The growth of a thorn-tree on the one side, and the beating of the sun on the other, were doubtless the origin of the names by which Jonathan knew them three thousand years ago. That he could really climb the northern cliff, though with no small difficulty, has been proved by a repetition of the feat in our days. But then there was no Philistine picket overhead! Strange to say, on the precipitous height, the lowest courses of a square tower are still to be seen, so that an outpost must clearly have been stationed here in ancient times.

It was up the face of this cliff, then, that Jonathan and his armour-bearer clambered that day, the Philistine soldiers above mocking them, as they tried to ascend, with the cry, to each other, and to the two braves—"The Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they have hid themselves!" "Come up to us, and we will show you something!"[3] But on the heroes went, climbing up with hand and foot, Jonathan first, the armour-bearer after, the two falling upon the outpost as soon as they had reached the top, and cutting down

[1] R.V. [2] 1 Sam. xiv. 4. [3] 1 Sam. xiv. 11, 12.

twenty men within the space of half an acre. The warders of Saul, looking out from the hill of Geba, two miles off, to the south-west, must have seen the stir from the first, and the spread of general panic among the garrison that followed, as "they melted away, and went hither and thither."[1] A path leads down from Geba to Michmash; and, this distance once passed by their enemies, the Philistines would have been cut off from their retreat, if they had not flown quickly. Away, therefore, they sped, down the valley leading past Ai to Bethel, then south-west across the watershed to Upper Bethhoron, then down the steep descent to Lower Bethhoron, and across the broad corn valley of Ajalon, to the Philistine country. The pass by which they thus fled was that in which Joshua had consummated the great victory over the Canaanites in the first days of the nation, and where Judas Maccabæus was to defeat and drive back the invaders of his country.

It was by the Wady Suweinit that the Assyrian army entered the land in the invasion so magnificently brought before the imagination by Isaiah. They have already, in his picture of their advance, climbed through the pass from Jericho, and "have taken up night quarters at Geba; Ramah trembles; Gibeah of Saul is fled!" Every local touch is given; and it is even added how the baggage has been sent beforehand, by a side wady, to Michmash, that the army might press on straight towards Jerusalem.[2]

Michmash itself is a very poor village, but its houses show traces of a very different state of things in former ages. Old pillars lie about, and some of the dwellings are wholly built of large squared stones, from ancient ruins. Others have great dressed stones for lintels and

[1] Sam. xiv. 16 (R.V.) [2] Isa. x. 28, 29. See also p. 161.

doorposts to their little courts; and in one spot lies the carved head of a freestone column. Under the Romans, as under the Philistines, a military post was stationed at the pass close by, one memorial of which I bought from a peasant: a small bronze statuette of Diana with her quiver, but the feet gone, which had been found in ploughing. How long had it lain since its first owner lost it or threw it away?

Tombs and caves are found in the neighbourhood, and in the village are the remains of a vaulted building used as a granary, from the top of which I looked out over the landscape. To the east and north the hills rose, as it seemed, almost as high as Neby Samwil; on the west was a very deep, broad ravine, with bare, grey, rounded hills at its sides, and a background of higher ascents close at hand; on the south there was a sea of hills to the horizon. Men, women, and children clamoured, of course, for bakshîsh, but they were very civil, greeting us courteously, though without uncovering the head; for to bare the head is contrary to Oriental ideas of respect. According to immemorial custom the hours are numbered from the rising of the sun, and we thus happened to arrive about the sixth hour, a special time of devotion among Mahommedans. Turning their faces to Mecca, the men, led by a venerable functionary with flowing white beard, prayed with exceeding reverence, as if no one had been present; generally standing erect, but often bowing the head, and from time to time kneeling, and touching the ground with their foreheads. Their lowly prostrations reminded one of the words of Abraham—"Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes."[1] Before leaving, I had a refreshing drink of curdled goat's milk, deliciously sour in weather so hot:

[1] Gen. xviii. 27.

the very drink which Abraham gave to the angels.[1] A few horses were feeding in the thin pastures east of the village, and it was noticeable that the deep, broad valley between Geba and Michmash was, in reality, furrowed into a number of smaller valleys and plains, separated by lower or higher undulations, till they merged into one close to the entrance to the pass. On a number of the roofs of the village huts, stoneware hives spoke of the care of bees, which cannot but thrive in such a neighbourhood as this.

[1] Gen. xviii. 8.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BETHHORON, BETHEL, SHILOH.

The ride from Michmash to Bethel was, as usual, only to be done at a slow walk, the horses picking their steps, at one time over smooth sheets of rock, at another over heaps of boulders; now up a steep rough hill; then down its farther side, with the occasional delight of level ground in the stony bottom of a valley. I bade farewell to the village with regret, for it had for the moment lighted up long-dead centuries, from the days of Joshua to those of the Maccabees—one of whom, Jonathan, had his home in it for years.[1] The track lay nearly north, passing a cave below the village which was used as a dwelling, the wife busy at the entrance making butter, by swinging to and fro a skin full of milk, hung from three props, she pushing it with a stick. We followed the old Roman road, now traceable only here and there, but the way was very desolate and barren alike uphill and along the hollows, and nobody passed us. Below, on the right, a deep wady with steep rocky sides reached far down through the hills, which frequently offered sheets of bare rock for the smooth feet of the horses. Nearing the village of Deir Dewan, attractive on its hill from the new look of its houses, agriculture once more began, some of the peasants being still busy ploughing with small oxen, though most of the land, wherever possible, had already been ploughed and

[1] 1 Macc. ix. 73.

sown. A mile before we reached the village, fig- and olive-trees brightened the valley, which began to broaden as we advanced. A well at the side of the track was covered with a great stone, like that which Jacob rolled away from the mouth of the well at Haran.[1] Ruins here, as almost everywhere, lay at various points—the tombstones of cities, towns, and villages of the past.

Still following the direction of the old Roman road—the line taken by which had probably been a highway for thousands of years before these great road-makers utilised it—we rode along the side of an isolated hill, two miles from Bethel, which lay north-west from us. The broad, flat top was surmounted by a great mound, such as might mark the ruins of some ancient fortress. It was the site of Ai,[2] "The Heap," now called "El Tell," which has the same meaning; the huge mound being the cairn raised over the burnt and desolate city by Joshua. The capture of this stronghold by that chieftain was the turning-point in the Hebrew invasion. Jericho having fallen, the way was opened for the conquest of the mountain country above it. Spies were accordingly sent up the Wadys Kelt and Suweinit—which are dry in the hot summer weather—past Michmash, to Ai, and on receiving their report a strong force climbed the same defile, with its towering crags and rough footing. But, just as the first attempt of the Israelites forty years before at Hormah, on the southern side of the country, to force their way through opposition, had been disastrously repulsed, so here at Ai a strong position enabled the inhabitants to repel the invasion of Joshua, and to hurl his force back "from before the gate," in sad confusion, many of his men being killed by their pursuers as they fled down the steep wadys by which they had ascended. Achan's death in

[1] Gen. xxix. 3. [2] Josh. vii. 2 ff.

the valley of Achor—that part of the Wady Ḳelt where it opens on the plains of the Jordan—followed, and then came the second attempt. They felt that they must not fail again, and be sent back once more for forty years to the Wilderness, as after Hormah. An ambush was laid by night in the valley between Ai and Bethel, on the north, while Joshua drew up the rest of his men, in sight of the town, on the north side of the ravine of Deir Diwan. From this, however, they presently descended into the flat bottom of the wady, as if from faintheartedness they proposed once more to retreat. Deceived by the stratagem, the King of Ai left his stronghold and rushed down to destroy his enemies as they fled to Michmash, but when he was fairly out of the fortress, and away far down the slopes, Joshua, who had remained behind on some eminence where his men in ambush could see him, gave the signal by uplifting his spear, and forthwith the city was taken by a rush, and set on fire; the pillars of smoke serving to stay the pretended flight down the pass, and place the men of Ai between the forces in rear and in front; every man of them perishing in the massacre that followed.

The rout of the Philistines at Michmash after the great deed of Jonathan and his armour-bearer was followed by a heady flight up the very track by which we had come —that of the first invaders — past Bethel, through the wood, now long vanished, where Jŏnathan, almost spent, rekindled his spirit with the wild honey dropping from the trees to the ground.[1] Thence the rush of men swept on across the plain, from which rises Gibeon, and away down the pass of Bethhoron, to the wide corn-land of Ajalon, the gate to their own land—the maritime plain.

The Pass of Bethhoron, that is, "The House of Caves,"

[1] 1 Sam. xiv. 25—26.

has a famous history in the wars of Israel. Beginning about twelve miles south-west from Bethel, it runs slightly north-west, for nearly two miles, down towards the plains, opening at the foot of the hills on the broad expanse of Ajalon, whence the lowlands can be easily reached. There is another pass up the hills from the sea-coast, beginning at Latron, about fifteen miles east of Jerusalem. Latron lies eight hundred feet above the sea, and was once the seat of a crusading fortress, known as "The Castle of the Penitent Thief;"[1] and the track winds up towards the Holy City between rounded hills and deep open valleys. But in ancient times that of Bethhoron was most in use. The wadys which run down from the mountains to the sea in the west are very different from those on the other side of the country, which lead from the high lands to the Jordan. Rounded hills and an open landscape take the place of the tremendous gorges of the eastern slope; but though there are these differences, the fact that travel is pent up in one narrow hollow, on the west as well as on the east, has in all ages made both sides almost equally perilous in a military sense. A broad, undulating expanse of corn-growing land forms the valley of "Ajalon," or the "Gazelles," still recognised in the name of one of its villages, "Yalo." In those old days, the country seems to have abounded in game, for not only "gazelles," but their natural enemies as well, must have been numerous, since this locality had villages known, respectively, as Shaalbim, "Foxes" or "Jackals," and Zeboim, "Hyænas." Rising gradually, in slow ridges, from an elevation of about nine hundred feet above the sea, this charming open landscape climbs nearly four hundred feet higher, through a steadily narrowing valley to the lower Bethhoron. This

[1] Castellum Boni Latronis.

lies more than seven hundred feet below Upper Bethhoron, two miles off, at the head of the ravine. There is no gorge or dark glen, with high walls of rock; rounded hills, bulging up like huge bubbles, with side valleys between, line the track, presenting little difficulty of ascent at hardly any point. The lower village stands on a swell, almost at the foot of the mountains; a path, thick with stones, leading past it, across some level ground, to the foot of the pass. From this point, the ascent is very rough; at times over wide sheets of bare rocks; at others, up steps rudely hacked out of the rock. It takes an hour to get to the upper village, and, by such a road, one feels that the ascent of an invader, in the face of brave resistance, would be as arduous as flight downwards from the mountains, before victorious pursuers, would be hopelessly disastrous.

In all ages the two Bethhorons seem to have been strongly fortified; remains of a castle still crown the hill at the lower village;[1] the foundations of some post mark the middle of the ascent, and other ruins guard the top. Looking down from the upper village, one sees the track first winding down the hill as an open path, then round the side of the swell below, with a gentle slope above and beneath; and only after leaving a broad open valley, dotted with olives, below this, does it enter on its course towards the sea. Dry stone dykes, enclosing fruit trees—shapeless masses of prickly pear serving as fences—and small plains between soft slopes—growing stones, however, instead of grass, and thorns instead of corn—stretch away before you; the track twisting hither and thither, like a stream, till the last bend of the hills conceals its entrance on the wide expanse of Ajalon. Beyond these hills, however, the eye ranges over the plains and the belt

[1] Nether Bethhoron was fortified by Solomon (1 Kings ix. 17).

of yellow barren sand at the shore, to the deep blue sea, reaching illimitably away. Behind, between the top of the pass and Gibeon, lies a country almost as difficult: wild and rocky mountains, where the paths are scarcely worthy of the name, and cannot be threaded without a guide.

It was across this track, and through Bethhoron, that the defeated alliance of the chiefs of Southern Palestine fled before Joshua, in his next great battle after the taking of Ai. He had marched to Ebal and Gerizim after that town had been destroyed, the headquarters of the Hebrews still remaining, however, at Gilgal in the Jordan plain. There two deputations, in succession, came to him from Gibeon; the first overreaching him into an alliance with them; the second announcing that a great league of the kings of the Negeb and the sea plains were assailing their town for having made peace with the Hebrews. An appeal for instant aid was urged and at once heard.[1] The peril, indeed, was quite as great for the invaders as for the people of Gibeon. Joshua had the fine military virtue of swift as well as wise decision, supported by splendid energy. A forced march up the Wady Kelt, with its grey, mountain-high cliffs, through the Wady Suweinit, past Geba and Ramah, brought him in one night to the more open but still mountainous track in which Gibeon stood, perched on its lofty hill, more than 2,500 feet above the sea, and some hundreds of feet above the surrounding country. The sudden appearance of his force at sunrise, where the night before all had been security, with no dream of this counter-attack, at once threw the "Amorite" host into the wild panic of a surprise. The remembrance of Jericho and Ai, with the exterminating massacres that followed; the ominous vigour which had made this surprise possible; the haughty

[1] Josh. x.

bearing of a force confident of victory, and, withal, the terrible shout with which it rushed to battle, at once decided the day. "Not a man could stand before" the Hebrews, still in the full flood of their first enthusiasm and spirit. Through the defiles leading westward; up the steep ascent to Bethhoron the higher; then down the back of the ridge to Bethhoron the lower, the flight was ever faster and more confused. To add to the misery of the rout, one of the terrible storms that from time to time sweep over the hills of Palestine burst on the dismayed fugitives; great hailstones smiting them as their disordered crowd fled down the pass.[1] Meanwhile, Joshua had taken his stand, for the moment, at the head of the pass, with its long windings between the rounded hills beneath him; the broad, heaving plain of Ajalon beyond its southern end, and the blue waters of the sea apparently close behind, telling of the nearness of safety from further pursuit. Lofty hills concealed Gibeon, at his back, but the sun was still high above them[2] on its course to the west, and the pale disc of the moon, then in its third quarter,[3] showed white and faint through the hailstorm. Darkness, it was to be feared, would come all too soon and stop the pursuit; the foe would escape to the lowlands, and the victory come short of being decisive and final. It was felt by Joshua, above all in his host, to be a supreme moment in the story of Israel, and, as a quotation in Scripture from an ancient record of the heroic deeds of the Tribes—the Book of Jasher—informs us, the excitement found utterance with him, as it always does with men of such puritan spirit, in an appeal to God. "Sun," cried he, doubtless lifting up his hand to the great orb, "stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon." "And the sun stood still and the moon stayed,

[1] Josh. x. 11 [2] Josh. x. 13. [3] Conder, *Pal. Fund Reports*, 1881, 258.

until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies." [1]

From Ai the way to Bethel is over stony hills. To the west of the great mound is an open valley which sweeps slowly round to the track by which we had come; the road made use of by Joshua when he ascended from Jericho; and, on the north, another larger ravine, where the ambush lay hidden, ends in a narrow, rough pass leading up to Bethel. Rock-cut tombs, ancient cisterns, and three great reservoirs hewn out of the hard limestone at Ai, speak of the importance of this place in days before the Hebrew conquest. But life has for ages forsaken it.

Bethel is one of the most desolate-looking places I ever saw. Long round hills of bare grey stone, russet spots of thorns and coarse herbage rising in their cracks, and poor specks of ploughing among the stones, where there was any surface to be stirred; a small valley with an old tank, in the dry bottom of which our tents were raised; a wretched village on the crest of one of the broad-backed earth-waves or rocky bubbles of hills; the cabins rudely built of stone filled in with mud, though there are two or three better houses of two storeys; rough stone fences, with some fig-trees; spots of lentils and grain in one of the valleys, the side of which was nothing but weather-worn stone; sheets and shelves of rock everywhere, unrelieved by any trees; a few poor vines above the village; a high, square, low-domed building, rising on the top of the hill on which the village stands; some ancient tombs on the sides of the neighbouring valleys,—such is Bethel. No wonder the patriarch had to use a stone for his pillow when he lay out on one of the hills around; it would be hard to find anything else, even now.

The Hebrew word Makom, constantly translated

[1] See Geikie's *Hours with the Bible*, ii. 415.

"place" by the Authorised Version,[1] in Genesis, in connection with Bethel, appears to have been employed specially for a sanctuary of the Canaanites, as when we read, "Ye shall utterly destroy all the *places* wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods;"[2] and in this sense it is used in the Talmud of the shrines regarded as lawful for Israel before the Temple was built. It is, moreover, identical with the Arabic "Mûkam," or "Standing-place," the name given to a holy shrine or consecrated spot, so that in all ages the word has had the same special application, universally understood in the East. Jacob, on seeking his night's rest, would naturally avail himself of the protection, ghostly and bodily, of such a local shrine, as an Arab now takes up his quarters, if possible, beside a Mahommedan Mûkam. Such a "place" he would at once find in the altar which his grandfather Abraham had built between Bethel and Ai, and he would lie down under its shadow without the fear of being injured, in the belief that the God of his fathers would there look on him with favour. The spot was then beside a town called Luz, and got its name of Bethel from the wondrous incidents associated with it in Jacob's history. Till that time only a "place," it was henceforth a "House of God." The view around, before darkness fell, consisted, in all likelihood, only of grey rounded hill-tops, for Bethel is shut in by hills on the west, north, and east, although on the south the heights and valleys of Benjamin can be seen succeeding each other almost to Jerusalem. There is only one spot whence you can look into the valley of the Jordan—that on which the ruins of an ancient church now stand, above the village; the fact that it commands this view, fixing it beyond question as the spot on which Abraham and Lot must have stood when they looked over the country, and Lot's

[1] Gen. xxviii. 11 (three times), 16, 17, 19; xxxv. 7, 14. [2] Deut. xii. 2.

choice fell on the rich oasis of Sodom.[1] On these hills, then and long after more or less wooded,[2] at least with the scrubby growth of a "yaar," Abraham pastured his flocks, which could nibble the stalks growing in the thousand seams of the rocks. His black tents were pitched on these slopes. His camels grazed around, the foals following their mothers with the same staid, serious air that we notice in them now among the Bedouins. The broad-tailed sheep went forth from their thorn or loose stone folds, with the black goats, along these stony heights, while the oxen and asses found enough to support them in the small valleys. Sarah prepared her cakes here, in the hot ashes before the tents, and her female slaves had laboriously shaken to and fro the goatskins, full of milk, to make the "leben" and the butter. There are four springs at Bethel, so that it had the attraction of plenty of good water. A silence, broken by no sound, now reigns over all things, but it must have been very different then when darkness crept over the earth, and, the watchmen having taken their places with the flocks and herds, the men left in the encampment gathered round their evening fires, to listen, before they lay down, to the tales so dear to the Oriental. Before I went to bed I came out to look up at the sky, which was bright with innumerable stars, just as Abraham did well-nigh four thousand years ago,[3] when the voice in his soul directed him to look up to their multitude and their overpowering glory, as a pledge on the part of the Almighty to bless him and his posterity.

Shechem alone of Palestine towns is mentioned earlier than Bethel, Abraham's visit to it, as he went to Egypt, and on his return from the Nile, introducing it to Sacred

[1] Gen. xiii. 3, 10, 15. [2] 2 Kings ii. 23, 24.
[3] Gen. xiii. 14—18; xv. 5.

Story.[1] The altar he had built on his first sojourn on these hills was the point to which he came back; and even if Jacob did not know its history, it would be his natural halting-place, for the altar of so great a "prince" as Abraham would doubtless be regarded as a religious centre in the district. That it continued to be a holy place to Israel seems implied by the statement that in the days of the Judges "the children of Israel arose and went up to *the house of God*," or rather, as in the Hebrew, "to Bethel," as if the Tabernacle were then there,[2] and by the notice in Samuel of "three men going up to God, to Bethel."[3] It was thus, next to Shechem, the oldest sanctuary of the nation, so that Jeroboam introduced no innovation when he honoured it as a holy place, though it was a bold stroke to set up its ancient name against the fresh honours of the central Temple, recently built at Jerusalem, and, above all, a step wholly unprincipled to debase the national faith by consecrating, as an object of worship, a duplicate of the golden calf which had been so great an offence to Jehovah at Sinai.[4] From this idolatry sprang the contemptuous name Bethaven, "House of Nothingness"—that is, of idols—applied to Bethel by the later prophets, the contraction of which, after a time, into Bethan may have led to the present name Beitin, which has been in use for at least seven hundred years. It is strange to think that one of the great schools of the prophets flourished at Bethel, while the rival temple, with its calf deity, was in its glory.[5] Still stranger is it that this great seat of corrupt religion was left standing by Jehu, when he rooted out the worship of Baal from Israel.[6] But

[1] Gen. xii. 8, 9; xiii. 3.

[2] So also in the Septuagint, but the Vulgate inserts the words "which is in Shiloh" (Judg. xx. 18). Josephus thinks Bethel is meant (*Ant.* v. 2, 10).

[3] 1 Sam. x. 3.

[4] 1 Kings xii. 28.

[5] 2 Kings ii. 3.

[6] 2 Kings x. 28.

if it was spared then, the prophets Amos and Hosea, at a later day, fiercely assailed it, as also did Jeremiah at Jerusalem.[1] It was left to Josiah, however, to destroy it, and to defile its altars by burning on them the bones of dead men, taken from the rock tombs down in the valley.[2]

In the earlier part of this century Bethel seems to have been entirely uninhabited, and even now its miserable hovels have not a population, in all, of more than four hundred souls. A few poor gardens, fenced with stone walls, show the struggle of man with nature. But the great past is still kept from oblivion by fine squared stones seen in the walls of the tumble-down huts, and especially in the great tank in which we found camping-ground, for it covers the whole breadth of the little valley, and reminds one by its length of the Sultan's Pool at Jerusalem. An abundant spring bubbles up in an artificial basin at one end—the water-supply of the village; what is not wanted running to waste.

To prepare for starting on our way farther north was each morning a surprisingly brief affair. The tents were scarcely left standing till we had finished an early breakfast, and, once begun, the process of tying up and packing on the mules was a matter of a few minutes. I often thought of the aptness of the Bible figures in which tents and tent life are introduced, and was more impressed by them each day. Hezekiah's words, "My [fleshly] home is broken up, and removed from me as a shepherd's tent,"[3] rose forcibly in the mind when I saw the tent which was over me one moment levelled with the ground the next, and in a few minutes stowed on the back of a pack-mule, to be carried off. When it had been removed, no trace

[1] Amos iii. 14; iv. 4; v. 5; Jer. xlviii. 13; Hos. iv. 15; v. 8; x. 5, 15.
[2] 2 Kings xxiii. 15.
[3] Isa. xxxviii. 12.

remained of its ever having been there. The metaphor that follows was not less vivid, when one remembered the weavers at Gaza and elsewhere—"I have rolled up my life as a weaver rolls up his web when it is finished; God will cut me off from life as the weaver cuts off his work from the loom." How sublime are the words in which Isaiah speaks of God as the Being "that stretcheth out the heavens like [the] fine cloth [of a Sultan's pavilion], and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in."[1]

It is curious, by the way, to notice how the early tent-life of the Hebrews impressed itself on their habits of thought and speech, even to the last. But they still used tents largely in Samuel's day,[2] and even later, and Zechariah speaks, at the close of the Kingdom, of the Lord saving "the tent" of Judah.[3] The nation, in fact, never wholly gave up tent life, especially in the hot months, and the tribes beyond the Jordan never adopted any other. To this very day, indeed, wherever a Jew is found, even in the crowded courts of London, he if it be possible, raises a tent during the week of the Feast of Tabernacles, in remembrance of the early history of his race.

From Bethel we took the road to Shiloh, which is represented by the village of Seilun. Bireh, the ancient Beeroth, lay about two miles to the south-west, over the hills—a rambling hamlet of stone houses, all indescribably miserable. Its name, "Springs" or "Wells," speaks of a plentiful supply of water, still justified by a fine spring. Once a town of the Gibeonites, it was assigned to Benjamin, and has the doubtful honour of being the place from which came the two murderers of Ishbosheth.[4]

[1] Isa. xl. 22.
[2] 1 Sam. iv. 10; 2 Sam. xviii. 17; xix. 8; 2 Chron. xxv. 22.
[3] Zech. xii. 7. [4] Josh. ix. 17; xviii. 25; 2 Sam. iv. 2.

Still the first halting-place on the way from Jerusalem to Nazareth, it was fancied that Mary and Joseph had wandered back from it to the Temple, in search of Mary's missing Son. But it is quite as probable that His absence was noticed before the caravan reached Beeroth, as all such mixed companies halt at a comparatively short distance from their place of starting, to see, before they go farther, that everything is right and no one left behind. High on its hill, more than 2,800 feet above the sea, the village has a wide outlook over the surrounding country; but, though strong and prosperous under the Crusaders, it is now wretched enough. It boasts the ruins of a fine mediæval church, showing three apses; in its roofless area corn is grown. An old khan near the chief spring still speaks of former travel, but it is slowly falling to pieces, and only natives would tolerate its dreary old stone arches, with the ground for a sleeping place, shared in common by men, camels, horses, and asses.

To the east of Bethel, on a high hill four miles off, rose Rimmon, the place to which the remnant of the Benjamites fled from the infuriated tribes after the outrage on the Levite and his wife,[1] and a mile beyond it, on a high hill, shone Ophrah, now El Taiyebeh. As we went on, the Dead Sea gleamed, far down below us, in its chasm on our right, seemingly close at hand. The road, "if road it may be called where road was none," led over soft rounded hills and flat plains, with higher hills continually coming into sight to the north. Camels passed to the south, laden with wheat, and the country grew more fertile, for we were entering the rich territory of Ephraim. Three miles north of Bethel, on the old Roman road, now undistinguishable as such, stood Yabrud, on a hill to the

[1] Judg. xx. 47. See p. 162.

left of the track. Vines, with fig- and olive-trees, were here in their glory, east, west, north, and south, but it made no difference to the comfort of the people now living on the hills of Joseph, "rich with the blessings of heaven above, and of the deep that lieth under,"[1] that is, the springs from underground waters. The huts of the village were built closely together, but so much abomination of every kind had accumulated in the narrow lane which did duty for a street, that it was by no means delightful to go through it. One of the houses which we entered was so full of smoke that we had to make a hasty retreat, only to find that others seemed even worse. A smouldering fire of thorns burnt slowly against the walls, and as there was neither window nor chimney, the smoke had to make its way out as it best could, by the door, which stood open, though it was too chilly to make so much ventilation agreeable. It was in such houses that the woman who had lost a piece of silver needed to light a lamp even by day, and to turn the whole house upside down, to find her treasure.[2] One can imagine the simplicity of village life in Christ's day from that of the present. The father of the household sat on the ground, barefooted and turbaned, with a patched cotton shirt, and a sheepskin outside in for coat, feeding the poor blaze with fresh thorns. To cook some eggs, the mother of the family broke them into her solitary iron pan, put a piece of butter to them, and held them over the fire, which, being only of thorns, needed constant replenishing. The Wise Man must often have seen such poor fuel before he said so tellingly—"As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool; this also is vanity!"[3] A small clay oil-lamp stood on a projecting stone, and sticks jutted out in one corner, for the hens and pigeons of the establishment

[1] Gen. xlix. 25. [2] Luke xv. 8. [3] Eccles. vii. 6.

to roost upon. The floor was higher in one part than in another; the former being the place where the mats were laid for the sleeping accommodation of the human part of the household; the latter, the night-quarters of its four-footed members. Had I chosen the honour, I should have had, apparently, to lie down beside a donkey, but there were also some goats about, which found house-room near the ass. The lamp kindled, all the household lies down on the floor to sleep, but not, as with us, till morning, for the cocks begin crowing three or four hours before daylight, to the disturbance of anyone not accustomed to them. It is to this early crowing that our Lord alludes when He says, "Watch ye, therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning."[1] The smallness of the lamp creates another disturbance of slumber, for the housewife rises when she thinks it nearly burnt out, at midnight, or perhaps at two in the morning, and, after replenishing it with oil, begins her day's work, by sitting down on the ground to grind the corn needed for the approaching meals; and he must be a sound sleeper who is not roused by the rough music of the millstones. It was such a woman whom King Lemuel praised—"She riseth while it is yet night: her candle goeth not out by night."[2]

The weather continued beautiful as we journeyed on through this garden of Palestine, amidst thousands of fig-trees on the lower slopes and in the valleys, with olives over them, higher and higher up the hills, which were now bare only at the top. Fields of soft green stretched out under the shade of the orchards, which at one spot reached up the terraced sides of nine different hills, and across the valleys between them. The road, however, was

[1] Mark xiii. 35. [2] Prov. xxxi. 15, 18.

very stony and rough, so that though we enjoyed the view, it is a question if the horses and mules were as pleased with their part of the journey. We had with us, in all, five men, and ten mules and horses; the five attendants being a dragoman, a cook, the owner of the beasts, and two men to take care of them. The beasts consisted of three horses and seven mules. Labour is cheap in Palestine, and so is horse hire. Thus I found afterwards, at Damascus, that the hire of a horse was three francs a day for a tour in the Haurân, that sum including a man to take care of it, and the horse's keep.[1] Hotel accommodation is equally low, for no one who is not in the hands of a tourists' agent is in any place charged more than seven or eight shillings a day, even where coupons are five or six shillings dearer. Unfortunately, I did not know much about horse hire or dragomans till it was too late to help myself, but a friend kindly gave me a useful hint at Joppa about hotel accommodation.

The whole region through which we were passing was considerably over two thousand feet above the sea, but it continued beautifully wooded with figs and olives, even far up the terraced hills, which, in many cases, were crowned with a village. In less than two miles after passing Yabrud we reached the Spring of the Robbers—Ain Haramiyeh—a most picturesque spot; water trickling freely from the foot of a wall of rock twenty or thirty feet high, covered with delightful green of all shades, while the steep hill above is terraced and planted with olives. The valley is contracted at this part into a mere lane, thickly littered with stones of all sizes, the narrowness shutting out any view to a distance; and this, with the

[1] The charge made by the Tourist Office for myself and a companion was three pounds ten a day, which was exceptionally cheap, thanks to a local friend. Five pounds a day is the ordinary charge.

loneliness around—so favourable to the thieves from neighbouring villages—has probably given the place the evil name it bears. An old Crusading fort or hostelry, once eighty feet in length, stands south of the outflow of water from the rocks, but it is in ruins; there are also the remains of an old, finely vaulted cistern. The grass, nourished by refreshing moisture, was unusually thick and green close to the rocks, and with the verdure around, and the picturesque ruins, made a rest at this spot very agreeable. Some have fancied this valley to be that of Baca, through which pilgrims were wont to pass on the way to Jerusalem,[1] but this is based on a mistake, for Baca must have been some barren glen, which the joy anticipated by those about to appear before God in Zion made as beautiful in their eyes as if it were "a place of springs," and as if "the early rain had covered it with blessings."

The narrow pass of Ain Haramiyeh is one of the wildest parts of the road between Nablus and Jerusalem. A great hill rises about eleven hundred feet above the pass on the right, very steep, but terraced in some parts, bare cliffs of horizontal limestone jutting out in bands round it at others. But this lofty summit is dwarfed by another, a mile to the south—Tell Asur—two hundred feet higher.[2] A ruined Crusading fort looks down from the top of the lower hill, built as a look-out by the mail-clad warriors of the Christian kingdom of Palestine. The summit of the higher commands a magnificent view; the white cloud of snow on Mount Hermon, far away to the north, being clearly visible from it. The grandeur of the Crusading period is not to be realised except by visiting the East; most of us forget, indeed, that Christian princes reigned for two centuries in the Holy Land. Every part

[1] Ps. lxxxiv. 6.

[2] 3,318 feet above the sea.

of the country bears witness to the gigantic energy of the Western nations, great forts, churches, hostelries, and cloisters, built as if to last for ever, still remaining wherever one turns, to witness to the mighty enthusiasm which so long animated Christendom. Even at this secluded spot, besides the stronghold on the hill to the right, an old Crusading fortress, known as Baldwin's Tower, its name derived from that of one of the Latin kings of Jerusalem, crowns the top of a hill, six hundred feet above the pass and about a mile to the south; it, and its neighbour to the right, standing as grim sentinels to watch the road from the north in the old troublous times. Three miles north of this, the road brought us by a steep ascent to the village of Sinjil, which is only a variation of the name of the Count de Saint-Gilles, who rested here on his way to Jerusalem during the first Crusade. It was then an open village of about a hundred houses, but there are not nearly so many now. Traces of the old Roman road are still visible as you climb towards this hamlet; kerbs of large stone enclose a causeway, rough enough to-day, but no doubt smooth and level when first made, though the narrowness of the track excites one's wonder.

The country from Bethel had been not only more fertile than that nearer Jerusalem, but different in its features. The hills were steeper and more rocky; the valleys deeper; not seldom opening into plains, as at Turmus Aya on the right, below the hill on which Sinjil stands. A little over two miles to the west, on a height a little lower than that of Sinjil, gleamed the houses of an Ephraimitish Gilgal, now Jiljilieh, probably the place from which Elijah set out with Elisha on the way to the Jordan, just before the great prophet was taken up into heaven.[1] The drainage of this side of the watershed is effected by watercourses

[1] 2 Kings ii. 1.

running irregularly to the west, through valleys too steep and rough to be passable on horseback, at least as they sink down towards the sea plains.

We were now close to Shiloh—the modern Seilun—to reach which we turned off and went along the side of the hill, to avoid passing near the village of Turmus Aya, the inhabitants of which have a bad reputation as thieves, or worse. The plain at our feet was in part under cultivation; in part covered with orchards of figs and olives; and here, as elsewhere in Ephraim, there were many vineyards on the slopes, with watch-towers in each. We had camped for the night on the hill near Sinjil, to keep away from dangerous neighbours, and were on our road betimes, but while the tents were packing, numbers of women and children gathered to look for any scraps, so poor are the people, even in this part of the land. On the roadside I was interested by noticing a scarabæus beetle, the very creature so common on the sculptures of Egypt, rolling before it a ball of moist cow-dung, in which its eggs were to be secreted. It is a broad, strong creature, with a shovel-like head, but its whole length is not much over an inch, while the ball it pushes before it is half as much more in diameter. How it contrives to dig a hole large enough to bury this egg-ball is hard to imagine, yet the feat is less wonderful than that of our own common burying beetles, who play the sexton even to the bodies of little birds, sinking them into the earth and covering them in a very short time. Among the Egyptians, the scarabæus was a symbol of the sun and of creation, apparently because its ball is round and life comes from it.

The roundabout we had to make brought us across the plain a mile or so north of Turmus Aya; the village of El Lubban, hard to distinguish from the hillside to which it clung, straggling over the slope on our

left: a poor place, with a few fruit-trees, stone walls, a ruined khan, a fine spring, and very bare stony ground above and around it.

The ruins of Shiloh stand on a low hill covered all over with a deep bed of loose stones. Belts of the chalky rock girdled the surrounding hills to the top, the strata lying horizontally, and boulders strewing the rounded summits. The natural terraces formed by the rock-beds were here and there planted with fruit-trees, but often left to thorns and scrub. In a short side valley closed by a hill, numbers of rock tombs had been cut in the thicker bands. Riding to the end of this, over a track thick with stones and boulders, we found a fine spring at the roadside, with a pool. A broken trough lay at the side, and a peasant was busy washing himself in the beck, though it was the only drinking-supply. Stones around, hollowed to contain water, served for the wants of flocks. A number of country people were beside the fountain, the intelligent faces of the children very pleasant to see, though here, as elsewhere, many were suffering from affections of the eye. Some gardens of young fig-trees had been planted at the top of the valley, and were enclosed within loose stone walls, but most of the little glen was lying wild on both sides of the white torrent bed, now dry, that wound through it.

Two rock tombs, once part of the low brow of rock beside the spring, had become detached from the hill; one slipping forward in a great mass, with a deeply hollowed round roof, and a cavity within; the other broken in pieces. Strange to say, there were rock-cut steps still joined to the unbroken one, at the side. The hill opposite was terraced; fig-trees were growing on the ledges, some fringing the swelling at its top.

Riding back to the ruins themselves, we found them

on the breast of a low swell, beside the poor modern village. An oak, though of course not like those of England for size, gave dignity to the spot, and threw a shadow over a small, half-ruined Mahommedan mosque. Not higher than fifteen or twenty feet, the inner space had once been vaulted. Two chambers, supported on short pillars, with a prayer-niche to the south, filled up the thirty-seven feet of its length. Part of it was evidently very old; the rest spoke of different dates, and of materials gathered from various sources. The capital of one of the pillars rested on a disproportionately thick shaft, and two fairly carved pieces of marble, each about a yard long, had been built into one of the walls. The flat lintel over the doorway bore signs by its ornaments of having formerly done service in an ancient synagogue, or rock tomb. A stair led up, inside, to the roof, which was overgrown with rank weeds, among which were many bright flowers. The walls were, in parts, not less than four feet thick; elsewhere, only half as thick. This strange place may have been originally a Jewish masonry tomb: certainly it cannot have been a Christian church.

The crown of the low hill was specially interesting, for it is covered with very old low walls, divided as though into the basements of many chambers of different sizes. Some of the stones were hewn, others unhewn, and some of these latter were very large. The outline of the whole was an irregular square of, say, about eighty feet, with projections on two sides; the walls being everywhere very thick. Could it be that these were the stone foundations on which, as we know, the ancient Tabernacle was raised? Had the pillars in the mosque near at hand been taken from these ruins? Were those low walls within, remains of the chambers where Eli and Samuel had once lived? Were those rock-hewn sepulchres we had seen in the small

valley to the east the ancient resting-places of the family of the ill-fated high priest?

No spot in Central Palestine could be more secluded than this early sanctuary; nothing more featureless than the landscape around; so featureless, indeed, the landscape, and so secluded the spot, that from the time of St. Jerome till its re-discovery by Dr. Robinson in 1838, the very site of Shiloh was forgotten and unknown. The Philistines seem to have destroyed the whole place after the defeat of Eli's sons and the loss of the Ark, though the coverings of the Tabernacle were saved and carried to Nob, where they continued for a time.

Before its glory was thus eclipsed, this place was evidently as near an approach to a national sanctuary as Israel then had. "Behold," we are told, "there is a feast of the Lord in Shiloh yearly, in a place which is on the north of Bethel, on the east of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah."[1] This annual gathering of young and old to the religious festival honoured by all the tribes reminds us of a strange incident of ancient life enacted in this quiet centre. There were great dances of the Jewish maidens, it appears, at this festivity, the fairest of the land trooping to the scene of so much gladness, and joining in it decked in their best holiday attire. The vineyards then covering the slopes and plain were thick with foliage at the time, though leaving open spaces on which the bright-eyed girls disported themselves to the sound of the timbrel and the clapping of hands, as one sees done among Eastern peasant women to-day. Suddenly, however, on this occasion, by pre-arrangement, from the green covert of the vines there sprang out a host of young men, who each seized a maiden and hurried her off

[1] Judg. xxi. 19.

to the south to the hills of Benjamin—sadly in want of the fair sex since the dreadful massacre of the tribe by united Israel, after the crime against the Levite and his wife.[1] "The children of Benjamin," we are told, "took them wives, according to the number of them that danced, whom they caught;" some, perhaps, not sorry to find homes of their own, even thus strangely. A part of the plain to the south of the village is still called "The Meadow of the Feast," perhaps a reminiscence of the old festival, unless, indeed, this took place beside the fountain east of the village. The vine has long ago disappeared from the locality, which, however, is undoubtedly well suited to its growth.

A number of men and boys gathered round us while we were examining the ruins, their clothing only a blue shirt, with a thin strip of leather round the waist to keep it close to the body, and make the upper part into a kind of bag; the "bosom"[2] in which the peasant stows away what we put in our pockets. The number of blind or half-blind among them was most pitiable. Acute inflammation of the eye is allowed to go on from stage to stage, till the whole organ is destroyed by ulceration. My companion, a doctor in the army, examined two or three boys, and found that a slight ailment which, in more favoured lands, might have been cured at once by a simple "wash," had been neglected till the sight was gone. One can understand why blindness is mentioned in Scripture about sixty times, from noticing its prevalence in any knot of peasants, all over Palestine. The sight of any gathering of either sex, shows how natural it is to find it said that our Lord, at a single place, "gave sight to many

[1] See p. 162.

[2] Isa. lxv. 6, 7; Jer. xxxii. 18; Luke vi. 38; Ps. lxxix. 12; Prov. xvii. 23; xxi. 14.

blind," and that "a great multitude of blind" lay at the side of the pool in Jerusalem; and it helps one at once to understand, also, how it came to be specially given forth, centuries before, that the Messiah would give recovery of sight to the blind.[1] Of course the requests for back-shîsh were continuous; but the poor creatures were quite prepared, it seemed, to give as well as to receive, for on my repeating the word, and holding out my hand as if I wanted something, a boy, in all simplicity, put his hand inside the breast of his shirt and pulled out some shrivelled figs to give to me. It was all he had, but it was at my service. I need hardly say that personal cleanliness was not carried to excess at Shiloh, more than elsewhere in Palestine. Washing the face well would probably have saved some of the peasants from blindness, but they have no soap, I presume, and undoubtedly no towels; while as to water, a bath at rare intervals in the village pond or fountain seems the utmost of which anyone thinks.

[1] Luke iv. 18.; vii. 21; John v. 3.

CHAPTER XXXV.

TO GERIZIM.

Leaving this venerable place, which had long been a deserted ruin, even in the days of Jeremiah,[1] we rode over the open plain along the side of the Wady Seilun—the Valley of Shiloh; the ground lying for the time idle, but covered with the stubble of a crop of Indian corn, which it had borne the year before. There were a few olives here and there, and rolling land broke the level around; for ground without hills is a rarity in Palestine. Red anemones and white cyclamens abounded, intermixed with other flowers; among them, if it can be called a flower, a curious variety of the pitcher plant, with a bag on each stalk to secrete water, as a reservoir from which to quench its thirst in the dry, burning heat that was approaching. An hour's ride, of course at the usual walking pace, brought us close to Lebonah, now Lubban, which we had already seen from a distance. The hill is extremely barren; but a little green was brightening the patch before the mud-coloured huts, and a few olives were growing around. There were also a few lean cattle about. From this point, the plain is surrounded by hills. Lebonah was a village as long ago as the time of the old Hebrew Judges,[2] and it was also one of the places from which the wine used in the Temple services was procured, though its nearness to the frontier of Samaria raised a doubt in later times respecting the absolute ceremonial cleanness of anything

[1] Jer. vii. 12. [2] Judg. xxi. 19.

brought from it, for might not the north wind blow some polluting dust on the grapes, or into the wine-presses, from the hated territory of the "foolish people of Shechem"?

Climbing up a rough slope, amidst rocks and thorny growth that made progress extremely laborious, the road soon bent downwards again, between stony, barren hills, though occasionally crowned by villages on both sides of the track, while groves of olives and figs enlivened the view at short intervals. Close by the road, just after passing the village of Sawieh, stood a very large khan, built of hewn stones, and fairly tenantable, though only as Orientals understand the phrase. There were such public hospices in the oldest times on the chief roads; mere shelters for man and beast—with a supply of water at hand—such as the prophet sighed after: "lodging places of wayfaring men in the wilderness."[1] Jewish travellers would not sleep in Samaritan territory if it were possible to avoid doing so, and hence this khan was built on the border, which ran past the village of Berkit, almost exactly in a line with the hospice. At Sawieh, therefore, we stood on the edge of Samaria, the stony valley north of it being the first piece of Samaritan ground. There is a fine evergreen oak-tree at this place; a great rarity in the land, which, as I have often said, possesses hardly any large trees at all. There is another species of oak which grows about twenty feet high, and a third which forms a large part of the stunted growth of the hills, rising only from eight to twelve feet in height; but even a single tree which is respectable according to our ideas, like Abraham's Oak at Hebron or this one at Sawieh, is to be seen only at very few places indeed in the Holy Land.

Towards noon, a very steep ascent over step above step

[1] Jer. ix. 2.

of rock, up which our horses had to find a practicable path as they best could, brought us to the top of a ridge from which the view to the north was magnificent. Straight before us, beyond a succession of lower hill-tops, rose the massy forms of Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, marking the Valley of Shechem, where Abraham raised his first altar in the land; and then, far away to the north, high up in the skies, shone a dazzling white cloud—the snowy crown of Mount Hermon. At our feet was the noble plain called El Mukhnah—about nine miles from north to south, and four from east to west—and on the slopes at its farther side, the village of Howarah. We were entering a region hallowed by the earliest traditions of Israel, dating from a time far earlier than the wretched feuds between them and the Samaritans. In the days of Joshua this had justly been the most famous part of the country, not only for its fertility and beauty, but as being consecrated by the presence of Gerizim, the Mount of Blessings, before which the Tribes had held their first great national assembly, and made a formal covenant with Jehovah, leaving the twelve stones inscribed with the law, and buried on the top of the Mount, as an abiding witness to their vows.[1] In those days Shiloh alone shared with Shechem the glory of being a central meeting-place of the nation for public affairs;[2] but Shechem had the special honour of seeing the people gathered in its valley a second time, just before the death of Joshua, to renew the covenant with God made in the same place long years before.[3] In this region the heroes of that age lived, and here they were buried. Five miles to the east of us, as we crossed the ridge, lay Kefr Hâris—the village of Hâris—recalling at once "Heres," where Joshua was buried.[4] The claims of Tibneh, which were first brought forward by Captain

[1] Josh. viii. 34. [2] Josh. xviii. 1. [3] Josh. xxiv. 25. [4] Judg. ii. 9.

Conder, have already been stated;[1] those of Kefr Hâris are these—that the Samaritans think it the right spot, and that Jewish pilgrims, seven hundred years ago, spoke of the tombs of Joshua, Caleb, and Nun as being here. Three hundred years ago one of the Rabbis wrote of the monuments over the tombs, and of the carob and pomegranate trees beside them; another gave a sketch showing three domed buildings, with two trees, and lights burning inside the domes.

Descending from the steep and stony ridge to a grassy slope, with some caves in its rocky side, in which two or three cattle had found coolness and shade, we spread our mats on the ground and had lunch, screening ourselves from the brightness as well as we could in the shadow of the rocks. Had we known it, a fine carob-tree, a little way farther on, would have given us a much more satisfactory resting-place; for, soon afterwards, we came upon one, from the thick boughs of which fluttered a great many bits of rags, it being regarded by Mahommedans as a holy tree. Some think that the "green trees" mentioned in Scripture as associated with idolatry among the Jews were of this kind—the carob—its thick, dark green foliage distinguishing it from all others in Palestine.[2] As we went across the beautiful plain, rich crops were rising in every direction. Women in their long blue cotton dresses, one or two with babies, were busy pulling out weeds, to carry them home as fodder. Children played about near their mothers, and at some places cattle and calves were tethered by short ropes, and allowed to eat what was within their reach. A little later, about three in the afternoon, other groups of women and children, who had been busy at the same task, were resting in the field; the women, doubtless, tired out with constant stooping.

[1] See Vol. I., p. 47. [2] Judg. vi. 25; Jer. ii. 20; iii. 6.

The hills around, forming a girdle to the valley on all sides, rose in green terraces, step above step, in the spaces between the horizontal beds, of limestone which were jutting out, many of these little plateaus showing long plantations of olive- and fig-trees. A string of camels stalked slowly past with long, ungainly strides, and, as evening drew on, the women, with their children, were to be seen slowly wending their way homewards, with large bundles of green-stuff on their heads.

Near Howarah we came on a natural pond, or hollow, of rain-water, brown with mud. Peasants bearing their ploughs on their shoulders had stopped at it, and after washing themselves, they turned towards Mecca and reverently said their evening prayer. The road to the village rose and fell slowly, in long waves, to the west, but there was nothing to detain us in the village itself. Much more interesting was the village of Awerta, in the middle of the plain, about two miles nearly east of Howarah, for in it is a domed monument which concurrent tradition, both Jewish and Mahommedan, asserts to be the tomb of Phinehas, son of the Eleazar who succeeded his father Aaron in the great office of the high-priesthood. Not far from this another domed tomb, in a paved courtyard, and under the shadow of a great terebinth, is said to be that of Eleazar, who, in his turn, was succeeded as high priest by his son Phinehas. There seems little doubt, indeed, that we have, in these tombs, the true memorials of the resting-places of the family of Aaron, and, if so, how venerable is the antiquity to which they carry us back! The great plain of Mukhnah, across part of which we pass to reach Awerta, is an undulating expanse, with villages cresting the successive elevations, wide cornfields stretching between them, and olive plantations running along the slopes. I know few finer sights than this great

breadth of fertile land, but perhaps its attractiveness is due in part to contrast with the general barrenness of Palestine. Three or four miles farther on, to the north-west, a valley opens to the west from the plain—that of Shechem, memorable in many ways. Just at the corner where you turn into it from the open ground, and close to the foot of Gerizim, is the hamlet of Balâta, the name of which among the Samaritans is "The Holy Oak" or "The Tree of Grace." This name strengthens the force of the identification of this site by St. Jerome with that of the Oak of Shechem or of Moreh[1]—under which Abraham pitched his tent and built his altar—the first sanctuary of Jehovah in the Land of Promise. It was under that tree, long since gone, that Jacob buried the teraphim of Rachel and the idolatrous amulets of his household, and under, or near it, he, too, built an altar, which he dedicated to El Elohe Israel—God, the God of Israel;[2] his habitual caution being shown in his first buying the land on which he "spread his tent," and which he consecrated to Jehovah.[3] At a later date, Joshua, also, recognised this ancient holy place of his nation, by "setting up a great stone under an oak that was by the sanctuary of God," as a witness which had "heard all the words of the Lord which He spake;"[4] as if in very deed the great commander had thought that the stone consecrated by him to Jehovah was in some sense connected with the Deity from that time. The belief that consecrated stones become in some way habitations of the Being to whom they are dedicated, has been held in every age by men at a particular stage of intellectual or religious development, as we see in the "holy stones" of our own country, which have enjoyed the superstitious

[1] Gen. xii. 6, *oak*, not *plain*.
[2] Gen. xxxiii. 20.
[3] Gen. xxxiii. 19.
[4] Josh. xxiv. 27.

reverence of the peasantry almost to the present day. In the same spirit, Arnobius, a teacher of rhetoric in the Roman province of Africa, and after a time a Christian Father, confesses, in the fourth century, that before becoming a Christian, "whenever he espied an anointed stone, or one bedaubed with oil, he worshipped it, as though some person dwelt in it, and, addressing himself to it, begged blessings from a senseless stock." The oak in Joshua's narrative was doubtless that under which Abraham and Jacob had raised their altar, and that altar was Joshua's "Sanctuary of God." At a later time, when the primitive tradition of the spot had become corrupted, an oak at some distance from Shechem was spoken of as "The Oak of the Meonenim,"[1] or Soothsayers; but that of Abraham and Jacob was here, or very close by.

Close to this site of the earliest sanctuary in the land is still to be seen the well which Jacob caused to be dug. As it is near magnificent springs gushing from the roots of Gerizim, and flowing to the east, his undertaking so heavy a task as sinking so deep a well and building a wall round the excavation can only be explained by the jealousy with which the Canaanites, like all Eastern peoples, no doubt regarded their own springs. To have trusted to these, would have been to invite trouble in the future: it was therefore very much better for the patriarch to have a well on his own property, so as to be independent of his neighbours. This Well of Samaria lies a little off the road, on the right hand; the track skirting the left slope of the valley. Turning my horse down the rough side of the road, it was a very short way, over stony, unused ground, to the sacred spot. There is nothing visible now, above ground. A little chapel, about twenty feet long, once built over the well, has long ago fallen,

[1] Judg. ix. 37.

its stones lying in rough heaps outside and around the opening below; not a few of them, I fear, at the bottom, helping to fill up the shaft. The ground slopes up to the fragments of the broken-down wall, and you have to let yourself down as you best can to reach the well itself. The church dates from the fifth century, but, except these stones, the only traces of it are some remains of tesselated pavements and carved stones, which are hidden beneath rubbish, but were seen by the Palestine Surveyors.

Over the well is a great stone with a round hole in the middle, large enough for the skin buckets of the peasantry to pass down. How old this covering is no one can say,[1] but the well itself, beyond the possibility of doubt, is that at the side of which, perhaps on some masonry long since gone, our blessed Lord sat, nearly nineteen hundred years ago, while the disciples had gone up the little valley to Shechem, a mile to the west.[2] The woman whom He met, and with whom He held discourse, came from Sychar, a little village now called Askar, just round the north corner of the valley, on the slope of Ebal, not half as far off as Shechem. The well is seven feet and a half across, and its depth, which some centuries ago was 105 feet, is still about seventy-five feet, though, for ages, every visitor has thrown down stones, to hear the echo when they strike the bottom. Thus the well is still "deep," and it must have been much deeper in the time of our Lord. It is cut through a thick bed of soil, swept down in the course of ages by the rains from the hills on each side; and beneath this great deposit, it passes through soft rock; the water filtering in through the sides, to the depth, occasionally, of about twelve feet, even yet, though it is now dry in

[1] Captain Conder thinks it certainly not older than the 12th Century A.D.

[2] John iv. 5—30.

summer, and sometimes for years together. It is thus rather a "beer," or rain pit, than a spring well, so that when our Lord told the woman that, if she had asked Him, He would have given her, not rain-water, such as she gave Him, but "living water," it must have struck her greatly. Over forty years ago, a boy was induced to allow himself to be let down for the apparently hopeless purpose of finding and bringing up again a Bible, dropped into the well accidentally three years before, and, strange to say, he found it, the bottom being quite dry at the time. The depth was then said to be exactly seventy-five feet. Captain Anderson also went down, in 1866, but had a perilous descent, for after passing through the round hole in the covering stone, and through a narrow neck, four feet long, requiring him to raise his arms over his head, he fainted away, and only recovered consciousness after lying for a time insensible on the stones below. The mouth and upper part of the well he found to be of masonry, with which, indeed, the whole of it had the appearance of having been lined. To sink such a shaft, seven and a half feet broad, through perhaps a hundred and fifty feet of earth and rock, was an undertaking involving no little skill, as well as a large outlay, and its existence is a proof both of the enterprise and of the wealth of the patriarch.

Our Lord must have sat with His face to the south-west, since He speaks of Gerizim as "this mountain." He may have pointed to it by a movement of the head, or with His finger, as He uttered the words which proclaimed the cessation of all great local centres of worship as exclusively holy. "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither on this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father," but true worshippers were to "worship the Father in spirit and in truth."[1]

[1] John iv. 21, 23.

Around Him were the same sights as are before the visitor of to-day—the rich side valley running up westward, to Shechem, with a rippling streamlet in its centre; the groves that border the town, hiding the houses themselves from view; the heights of Gerizim, towering in rounded masses one over another, to a great height, close before Him on the south. Mount Ebal, steep, but terraced almost to the top into gardens of prickly pear, which is grown for its fruit, lay behind Him, the little hamlet of Balâta, where Abraham's altar once stood under the sacred tree, the mud-huts of Sychar and the dome of Joseph's tomb being at its foot. To the east stretched away the great plain, which for miles each way was then "white already to harvest;" beyond it were the hallowed site of Salem, near to Enon, where His herald the Baptist had preached, and the wooded hill of Phinehas, with the tomb of the once fiery High Priest.

The traditional tomb of Joseph lies about six hundred yards north of the well, beside a little mosque with a low dome. Jews, Samaritans, and Christians alike accept it as the actual place of the burial of the patriarch, and it is quite possible that if it could be opened we should find his mummy below, for we read that the children of Israel brought the bones of Joseph from Egypt and buried them in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought, and that it became the inheritance of the sons of Joseph.[1] The tomb stands in a little yard close to the mosque, at the end of a fine row of olive- and fig-trees, and enclosed by a low stone wall. Two low pillars stand at the head and foot of the tomb, their tops hollowed out and blackened by fire; the Jews making a practice of burning small articles, such as gold lace, shawls, or handkerchiefs, in these saucer-like cups, in memory of the patriarch who sleeps beneath.

[1] Josh. xxiv. 32.

The Valley of Shechem is one of the most beautiful places in the Holy Land. Flowing water, lofty mountains, rich vegetation, and even the singing of birds among the hill-side copses or the rich olive-groves, unite to make it delightful. There are three large springs in the valley, running in a broad stream past the Turkish barracks, which are on the left hand, commanding the approach to Shechem, or Nablus as it is now called, by a contraction of the Roman name Neapolis, which means, like Naples, "The New City." On the open space east of this large building, a great number of Armenian pilgrims had pitched their tents beneath the olive-trees, their horses and mules hobbling round with feet tied together, while the owners rested and enjoyed themselves—for a merry set they appeared to be. Beyond the barracks, great numbers of the townspeople were amusing themselves in the staid fashion of Orientals, it being Friday, the Mahommedan Sunday. The women were all hidden by long white veils descending to the ground, before and behind; the men were in all colours. Passing round the town on the underside, to the east, and mounting through some very dilapidated roads to higher ground on the farther side, we found our tents pitched among olive-trees, just below the Mahommedan cemetery, with the pleasant prospect of having no water to drink but from a spring which bubbled out close to us on the slope, after percolating through some acres of graves. Such a situation never strikes an Oriental as undesirable for an encampment: indeed, it seems the rule to choose graveyards for this purpose, and it was only by great efforts that I could get water brought from above the cemetery to cook our dinner.

Nablus at last lay before us, a town of domes and minarets, more attractive from without, as it proved, than from within. To the right, looking down the valley, rose

Gerizim, in bold, angular masses of rock; on the left, Ebal, with its many terraces of prickly pear. Nablus has twenty-seven soap and olive-oil works, and great mounds of soap ashes rose near us like low hills, numbers of masterless dogs basking on them, or wandering about till night set them free to roam the town, from which they are quite aware they must keep away during the day. So it is to be in the New Jerusalem: dogs, despised and unclean creatures in the East, are there to be "without."[1] Beyond the town the valley was so narrow that a few olive and fig plantations filled it from hill to hill. There were no town walls worth mention, and the town gates seem long ago to have been removed, or to stand open permanently. Inside the town, the streets were much like those of Jerusalem, though a great proportion of them were vaulted over, making them both dark and dirty. The houses were of stone, with few windows, small projecting lattices—nicely carved in many cases—and low doors, here and there adorned with texts from the Koran, as a sign that the owner had been to Mecca. Some were several storeys high, and of an imposing appearance, but the great majority were low and mean. The town is very small, but it extends a considerable distance from east to west, in which direction the two principal streets run. One of these was full of moving life, which one could see, as there was no arch overhead, but the side lanes were mostly built over, and many had a filthy sunken path for beasts in the middle. No place could be more easily made clean and sweet, for water is to be had in any quantity from the high slopes behind, and, indeed, streams run down the western streets, but the others are left in their foulness, with dogs for the only scavengers, except in winter, when they are well scoured by wild torrents of rain.

[1] Rev. xxii. 15.

It is only within the last few years that Christians have been able to move about freely in Nablus, except in the sunken middle of the streets; but the Mahommedans are less ferocious now than they used to be. In the east of the town, a great mosque, once a church dedicated by the Crusaders to St. John, speaks of the ancient strength of their garrison. It is touching to see it, with the finely carved, deep gate, of three recessed arches and delicate side pillars, in the hands of the barbarian, and one can only hope that the Cross may some day again take the place of the Crescent.

The house of the Protestant missionary was naturally an attraction, but it was not easy to reach it through the labyrinth of cross alleys and lanes. In Europe, the variety in the look of the streets helps one to remember a route, but it is no easy matter to make one's way in an Eastern town, between rows of blank walls often darkened by vaulted arcades. The view from the parsonage, when I reached it, was, however, very attractive. Rich green rose everywhere among the yellow buildings. Gerizim towered on the south, and on the north the still higher Ebal lifted its great bulk to the heavens. The former hill is much more cut into clefts and distinct parts than the latter, and the Hebrews were justified in regarding it as the Mount of Blessings, apart from special religious causes, because of the abundant streams which pour forth out of its depths and make the valley the richest in the land. The slope of the strata being to the north, Ebal is prevented from contributing in the same way to the local fertility. Evening spread its shadows over the valley long before the glorious hills faded into dark masses—for in their outlines they were still visible under the stars. Nablus is one of the towns in the East where the practice, familiar in the days of our Lord, of

celebrating marriages and bringing home the bride during the night, is still observed. Drums, fifes, shouts, and rejoicings break the stillness as late as ten o'clock; old and young pouring out to see the procession—the maidens in their best, the bridegroom and his companions, the bride deeply veiled, the musicians, the crowd, and above all, the flaming lights, which give animation to the whole.[1]

The ascent of Gerizim is made on horseback, but a good part of the way is so steep that it seems wonderful that the beasts can keep their footing among the loose stones. Passing up behind the town, you come very soon to a magnificent fountain, the water of which is led eastwards by an open watercourse. At this copious source some women were drawing for their households, others were washing their unsavoury linen; men were enjoying their ablutions, and boys were playing in the water. Gardens climbed the hill on the left of the track, beautiful with every fruit-tree that grows in Palestine; and at some places grain was springing up vigorously on terraces raised upon slopes so steep that it seemed impossible their walls could permanently stand. Vines, olives, and figs filled stray nooks; but the part of the hill up which our horses had to toil was too stony for any cultivation whatever. At several places the limestone stood out in bold cliffs which seemed to overhang the town, several of them forming natural pulpits, from any one of which Jotham may have delivered his famous parable, the earliest of which we know.[2] When about to utter it, this surviving member of the family of Gideon had suddenly shown himself on one of these projecting shelves of rock, inaccessible from below, but open for escape to the mountain behind. The olive, the fig-tree, the vine, the brier,

[1] Matt. xxv. 1 ff. [2] Judg. ix. 7 ff.

the bramble, and the thorn, introduced by him as the speakers in his parable, were all within view around, ornamenting the valley or the terraces with their silver-grey or green foliage, or flinging festoons from tree to tree, or creeping over the barren side of the mountain. To compare Abimelech to the worthless bramble, used then, doubtless, as now, for the quickly kindled, fiercely up-blazing, but speedily burnt-out fires of the tent, the household, or the local altar, was no less vigorous than true, and we cannot wonder that Jotham, the moment words so scathing had ended, fled into distant security.

After a weary climb we reached the top of the mountain, but had a long way to ride before we arrived at the farther end. The narrow plateau, now sloping upwards, now undulating, now consisting of rough shelves of rock, was partly ploughed for grain, partly sown; stone walls separated some of the patches, and a terraced road at one point stretched for a good distance. The spot where the Samaritans still sacrifice seven Paschal lambs is very near the east end of the ridge, and thus close to the true peak of Gerizim. A pit, or "tannur," in which the lambs are roasted, was all that appeared of last year's solemnity, and Easter was not to return till the twenty-ninth of April. A loose stone wall enclosed a space in which the preparation of the carcases for roasting takes place; the wool being removed with water boiled over a huge fire of brambles. A raised bank in this enclosure further marked where the priests stand during the ceremony, while a shallow trench showed where the sheep are fleeced. Near this sacred spot the whole community spend the night of the Passover in tents, eating the lamb at sundown, with bread and bitter herbs, after the old Hebrew mode.[1]

[1] Ex. xii. 8.

Beyond this, to the east, the highest part of the mountain is crowned with the ruins of a castle and a church; a Greek cross remaining over one of the gateways of the former. It dates from the early age of the Greek emperors, having been built apparently by Justinian, or at a yet earlier period. The ruins show that it must have been a very strong fortress, for its walls are nine feet thick, and extend 180 feet north and south, by 230 feet east and west, with four corner towers and one in the centre, each about thirty feet square; and there is a huge reservoir for water, measuring 120 feet east and west, by sixty feet north and south. The church has been quite levelled with the ground, but some courses of the castle walls are still standing. To raise such buildings on such a spot, more than twelve hundred feet above the plain below, must have involved immense labour.

I confess, however, that I was more interested in the Samaritan than in the Christian ruins, carrying back the mind, as the former do, to a period before the Captivity of Judah. A rock is pointed out—merely a sloping shelf of limestone—on which Joshua is said to have reared the Tabernacle; and a little rock-sunk trench is dignified as the scene of Abraham's sacrifice, though it appears to be as certain as anything can well be that the patriarch went to Mount Moriah at Jerusalem, not to Gerizim.[1] Joshua, as we know, after having "placed the blessings and the cursings" on Gerizim and Ebal, wrote the whole law on stones which he set up on Ebal;[2] coating them with the almost imperishable cement of the country, and writing on it, either with paint or with an iron style or pen, while it was soft. Such a mode of preserving writing was common in antiquity, and in so dry a climate would last almost for ever. The Samaritans believe that "the twelve stones"

[1] See Vol. I., p. 454. [2] Deut. xxvii. 2—8.

thus inscribed are still in existence on the top of Mount Gerizim, but Sir Charles Wilson and Major Anderson excavated the large masses of rudely hewn stone supposed to be those of Joshua, and found them to be little better than mere natural slabs. Underneath them were two other courses of stones, rudely dressed and unsquared, but there was nothing on them, and the whole appeared to be nothing more than part of one of the many terraces, or paths, which surround the early Christian ruins; or they may, with some similar remains, be the last fragments of the temple built by Sanballat on Gerizim, in opposition to that of Jerusalem;[1] or, again, part of the fortress of Justinian.

The natural amphitheatre formed by the receding of Mounts Ebal and Gerizim at the same point in the valley below, is wonderfully suited to such an incident as that of reading the law to the Hebrews, at the great assembly of the nation after the taking of Ai by Joshua.[2] The curse was to be put on Mount Ebal and the blessing on Mount Gerizim, half of the tribes standing on Gerizim, responding to blessings and affirming them; half on Ebal, taking the same part with the curses; while both blessings and curses were pronounced by the Levites, who were grouped round the Ark in the centre of the valley. At this, its widest point, the open ground, elsewhere for the most part only a furlong broad, is about half a mile across, but the tops of the two mountains are two miles asunder, while Gerizim rises 1,250 feet, and Ebal nearly 1,500 feet, above the plain.[3] No sight could well have been grander than this singular spectacle; the Levites in their white

[1] *Palestine Memoirs*, ii. 188.

[2] Deut. xxvii. 12 ff.; Josh. viii. 34.

[3] Gerizim, 1,249 feet; Ebal, 1,477 feet. Gerizim is 2,849 feet above the sea; Ebal, 3,077.

robes, guarding the sacred Ark on the gentle rise—the Shechem, or shoulder, which parts the waters flowing to the Dead Sea from those running towards the Mediterranean—and "all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges," in two vast companies, lining the sides of the two mountains, tribe by tribe, in ascending ranks, from the valley to the utmost height; the glorious sky over them as the only fitting roof of such a temple. That all the assembled myriads could easily hear the words of the Levites admits of no question, for the air of Palestine is so clear and dry that the voice can be heard at distances much greater than the residents in other countries would suppose. Sir Charles Wilson tells us, for example, that the Arab workmen on the top of Gerizim often conversed without effort with men passing along the valley beneath. Besides, the Blessings and Curses of the Law would be as familiar to Israel as the Litany or the Ten Commandments are to us, so that the responses would be instinctively ready as the reader finished each clause.

The view from the top of Mount Gerizim is of amazing extent and interest—the bare and desolate slopes of Ebal, watered only by rain from cisterns on the successive terraces that have been raised with much labour on its sides, since all the springs run through the strata, to the north side of the mountain; the cactus gardens on the lower terraces; the corn rising on many of those higher up, but the great bare mass of the hill swelling to the sky above; the valley below, with its gardens and orchards, the mosque at Joseph's Tomb, the Well of Samaria, and, just outside on the plain, the village of Sychar—a poor hamlet on the rocky slope of Ebal, which swells up in slow waves behind it; the glorious plain of Mukhnah—"the Encampment"—with its fields of

rich brown tilth; stray villages on its low undulations; clumps of olives beside them; and, on the other side, to the east, a long succession of round-topped hills, cultivated in terraces wherever there is a shelf for soil; while the distant landscape is sprinkled with olives, their grey intermixed with the green of the cornfields. On the west we could see Joppa, thirty-six miles off, at the sea; to the east, the chasm of the Jordan, eighteen miles distant; while at our feet, as if to bring us back from poetry to prose, the poles of the telegraph from Joppa stood up in their bareness along the valley, running past Jacob's Well, and then south to Jerusalem and Egypt, and east to Gilead.

The view from Ebal, however, is even finer. On the north you see Safed, "the city set on a hill,"[1] and the snowy head of Mount Hermon, with "Thirza," once the capital of the northern kingdom, famed for its beauty,[2] shining out on a very steep hill a little way beyond the plain; on the west, Joppa, and Ramleh, and the sea; on the south, the hills over Bethel; and on the east, the great plain of the Haurân, beyond the Jordan. A striking ruin on the summit of the mountain gives romance even to the Hill of Curses. The enclosure is over ninety feet square, and the walls are no less than twenty feet thick, strongly built of selected unhewn stones, without mortar, with the remains of chambers ten feet square inside. Within the building, moreover, is a cistern, and round it are heaps of stones and ruins. Excavation has thrown no light on the history of the structure. It is too small for a church, for there is only a space fifty feet square inside the amazing walls, and there is no trace of any plaster or cement, such as is associated with the incident of the great stones which Joshua set up, or with any altar that he may have raised on the mountain. Strange to say, some

[1] Matt. v. 14. [2] Cant. vi. 4; 1 Kings xiv. 17; xv. 21, 33; xvi. 8 ff.

peasant had carried his plough up to the top of the mountain, and had raised a fine crop of lentils, perhaps in the hope that, at such a height, they might escape the greedy eyes of the Turkish officials.

Guided to their quarter by the excellent missionary, I was able to pay a lengthened visit to the remnant of Samaritans still living in Nablus. To find the way to them alone would be, I should think, impossible, so numerous were the dark arches, cross lanes, and slums through which the road lay. This most interesting community has increased of late years from 135 to 160 souls, so that it is not actually dying out, nor does it seem likely to do so, the young men being very tall, strong, and handsome. The calamity of ignorance weighs upon them all, however, even physically, for there are several cases of imperfect sight, and of other troubles which a little knowledge might have averted. The synagogue was a very modest room, of small size, and in no respect fitted up ecclesiastically, though for courtesy we took off our boots on entering. In a recess at one side were the famous manuscripts of the Pentateuch, two of which were brought out and shown us, though there is a third of still greater age, seen by Mr. Drake and others, and said to be written on the skins of about twenty rams, slain as thank-offerings, the writing being on the side where the hair originally was. It is small and irregular, with the lines far apart, the ink faded and purplish, the parchment much torn, very yellow, and patched; the edges bound with green silk. Down the centre of the scroll, on the back, is said to run a curious feat of skill. By thickening one or two letters of a vertical column this inscription is alleged to have been created: "I, Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest—the favour of Jehovah be upon them—for His glory I have

written this Holy Torah [law] in the entrance of the Tabernacle on Mount Gerizim, near Bethel, in the thirteenth year of the possession by the Children of Israel of the Land of Canaan and all its boundaries; I thank the Lord." Unfortunately for the authenticity of this amazing inscription, there are great numbers of Samaritan rolls on which it appears, the same name, place, and date of composition being given in each case. The two venerable documents which I saw are on rolls, with silk covers, embroidered on the outside with gold letters as a title. The writing is very old, and, of course, illegible to anyone who does not know Samaritan. The form of the letters is said by Captain Conder to be not older than the seventh century of our era.

The High Priest, a young man, had his portrait to sell, after he had previously secured a gratuity. He is tall and thin, with a long, oval face, light complexion, and good features of a strictly Jewish type; but this by no means implies that he is of pure Jewish blood, since the immigrants sent to Samaria to colonise the country, after the Ten Tribes had as a body been carried off, were themselves Semitic, and, to judge from the monuments, must have been practically undistinguishable from Hebrews. There was no attempt at official dignity, but the friendliest equality amongst all, though it is very different when the priestly robes have invested the leader with his ecclesiastical dignity. Most of the conversation I had with them was on the theme about which they were most concerned—their earnest desire to have an English teacher who should content himself with lessons from the five books of Moses, which alone are canonical with them. "We have no one," said the High Priest, pathetically, "who can teach the common branches of education, and we want an English as well as an Arabic training. We should like

to know geography, writing, grammar, and history. We have tried your societies, but they will not send anyone to us if we do not let him teach the whole of the Old and the New Testament." I could not help thinking that to refuse an overture to teach from the Pentateuch alone was a great mistake, for it is part of the Word of God, and even where the whole Scripture is nominally the reading-book, teaching is practically confined to a part of it. The Samaritans, moreover, are bright, and easily taught; indeed, they are said to have been in such repute before the time of Ibrahim Pasha, fifty years ago, as to hold a special firman, entitling them to exclusive employment in Syria as scribes.[1]

The Protestant Mission has a school at which I found thirty-four girls and thirty-nine boys, of course in separate buildings, to suit the ideas of the East, but the teachers seemed exclusively natives, which I could not help thinking a great mistake. The school, in missions generally, is the supreme hope; and in my opinion, until British missionaries, like the American, enter on their work duly trained to be themselves teachers, day by day, in their own schools, and faithfully give themselves to this work, the results will be very far from justifying the great expenditure involved. A missionary's life in Palestine, if he be not a schoolmaster, is as nearly as possible a sinecure. At Nablus, for example, the only congregation consists of the few Greek Christians in the town. Mahommedans can only be reached by the school, which is attended by some of their children. But of what use can a poor native teacher be, with a varnish of knowledge over hereditary ignorance, in comparison with a European, born in the faith, and full of light and intelligence? The books used by the scholars were, I found,

[1] *Palestine Memoirs*, ii. 219.

from the American Arabic printing-press at Beirout, as are all the school books of every kind, not only in Syria and Palestine, but in the valley of the Nile, along the North of Africa, and over every part of Western Asia.

But I must not leave the Samaritans without a few words about the last survivors of a people so venerable. Following the same customs and religious usages as their forefathers for at least 2,500 years, and, like them, marrying only amongst themselves, they offer a phenomenon perhaps unique, for it was not every Jew, even in St. Paul's day, who could say that he was of pure Hebrew blood.[1] Not that the Samaritans are pure Jews; they are descended from Jews of the Ten Tribes who escaped deportation to Babylon and probably intermarried with the Semitic settlers sent into their country from the East by the Assyrian kings, after Samaria had fallen.[2] The Jewish element, however, won the less earnest religiousness of the heathen immigrants to its side, with the result of creating in the end a zealous worship of Jehovah and repudiation of idolatry. Proud of their descent from the Ten Tribes, and unwilling to admit that it was tainted, their national spirit had already made them intensely Jewish in their feelings before the return of Judah from its captivity in Babylon, and there can be no doubt that but for the narrow policy of Ezra in secluding his community from all relations with them, they would have joined him with all loyalty, and accepted Jerusalem as their religious centre. But the spirit of Rabbinism, with its fierce exclusiveness and hatreds, was dominant in the great Reformer, and Jew and Samaritan became mortal enemies. The Five Books of Moses were adopted as their only sacred writings, but it is not easy to say whence they got their earliest copy of the Pentateuch.

[1] Phil. iii. 5. [2] 2 Kings xvii. 24.

Most probably it was procured from the Jews at Jerusalem, on their return from Babylon, and before the two races finally quarrelled. The oldest manuscript now in their possession was written, apparently, as long ago as the time of Christ, though some give it a later origin; but in any case it is the oldest copy, by centuries, of any part of the Scriptures. When refused by Ezra any share in the building of the Temple at Jerusalem, the Samaritans, in their rage and hatred, built a rival sanctuary on Mount Gerizim; Manasseh, brother of the Jewish High Priest, and son-in-law of Sanballat, being its first High Priest. Two hundred years later, in the second century before Christ, this hated building was razed to the ground by John Hyrcanus—an act of destruction which increased, if possible, the terrible bitterness between the two peoples. A broad, flat surface of rock on the summit of Mount Gerizim is still revered by the Samaritans of to-day as the spot where their temple once stood: a spot so holy to them that they would deem it a sin to step upon it with shod feet. Whenever they pray, moreover, they turn their faces to this point, as the Mahommedans turn towards Mecca, and as the Jews in Babylon and elsewhere turned towards Jerusalem.[1] Nothing could be more bitter than the hostility which existed, generation after generation, between Shechem and the Holy City. "The foolish people that dwell at Shechem," says the Son of Sirach;[2] and even our Lord, to prevent His message being at once rejected by the Jews, had to command His disciples not to enter into any city of the Samaritans, who were classed with the heathen.[3] St. John, indeed, appears as if he wished almost to apologise for his Master's presence at Jacob's Well, by telling us that

[1] Dan. vi. 10; 2 Chron. vi. 34; 1 Kings viii. 44; Ps. v. 7; Jonah ii. 4.
[2] Ecclus. l. 26.
[3] Matt. x. 5.

"He must needs go through Samaria."[1] Since the fall of Jerusalem the history of the Samaritans is that of gradual extinction. Thousands at a time were put to death under the Roman emperors because of their political restlessness, and, as we have seen, they have now dwindled to fewer than 200, old and young.

It was impossible to leave a place so charming as the valley of Shechem without a final stroll down the plain. A fresh, glorious spring morning invited it. Nature was in all her beauty. Fine walnut-trees rose over thick groves of almond, pomegranate, orange, olive, pear, and plum trees, from whose branches came the music of birds. Thousands of cyclamens, red anemones, and dwarf tulips looked up from amidst the green. The blessings of Joseph indeed prevailed "unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills."[2] Wherever the rich streams could be led, fertility was luxuriant; but high up on the far-off shelves and cliffs of the mountains, scorched and split as they are by the sun, the Israelite long ago learned to look to the heavens, knowing that, to obtain a harvest in that lofty and arid region, the clouds must give their rain and dew.

South of the great mass of the Lebanon Mountains, Palestine has no central chain, with offshoots east and west, but, in place of it, a lower range, running southwards half-way between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea, at an elevation so closely corresponding to that of the nearly level summits all over the land that the watershed of the country is often hard to recognise, except from the direction in which streams are flowing. In the valley of Shechem, the point at which water parts to the Dead Sea on the one hand, and the Ocean on the other, is in the middle of the town of Nablus.

[1] John iv. 4. [2] Gen. xlix. 26; Deut. xxxiii. 13—15.

Some of its brooks flow east, others west, and it is from this, as I have intimated, that the old name Shechem—a "Shoulder"—is derived. 'To walk by the side of gently murmuring or silent waters is so rare a pleasure in such a land that one can realise the force of the words uttered by David—"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters."[1] What a long history crowded on my mind as I looked around! Before Shechem was built, Abraham and Lot had pitched their black tents on the plain through which I had walked; their long-eared, great-tailed sheep, and black goats, their tall solemn camels, and their small-sized oxen, had here nibbled the grass or twigs, the cactus or flowers; Sarah and her women-slaves, of course duly veiled, had glided about over these very risings and sinkings of the valley, and the stalwart herdsmen had watered their charge out of the rippling brook, still flowing over its bed of shining white stones as it did in the bright mornings nearly four thousand years ago. Here lived Jacob and his wives—poor Leah and favoured Rachel—and the slave-mothers of so many of his sons; and all his children except Benjamin, who was not yet born, ran over these slopes and waded in this stream. Here, the Tribes had often gathered, from Dan on the north and Beersheba on the south, after that first great assembly in Joshua's day; their great attraction to this spot being not only its beauty, but the altar of their forefathers under the sacred oak, the first, simple approach to a national sanctuary. Here the great assembly of the nation, after the death of Solomon, had been held, with results disastrous to Israel, through the wrongheadedness and folly of the wise man's son. Jeroboam, the fugitive, returned from Egypt—the man who had the fortunes

[1] Ps. xxiii. 1, 2.

of his country in his hand—raised his tents somewhere near. Temperate and shrewd, but firm, he here made his proposal of reform on behalf of the Ten Tribes; and the insulting reception that was given to it was followed by the wild cry, from ten thousand voices—"What portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse! To your tents, O Israel; now, see to thine own house, David!"[1] "Then Jeroboam built Shechem;"[2] that is, I suppose, changed it from a poor hamlet or village to a fine town. Here, too, centuries later, came a Descendant of Rehoboam, in simple dress; Claimant of a throne, like His ancestor, but a throne in the souls of men; and here He sat, weary, by Jacob's Well, leaving us immortal words spoken to a humble woman, perhaps a distant offspring of some one of those who, in the long past, had turned their backs on the line of David.

Three miles east of Shechem, at the head of the great Wady Fârah, which has in all ages been the highway from the Damieh ford of the Jordan to Shechem, there are great springs, marking the spot where lay Salem, the scene of the later work of John the Baptist, "near to Enon," "because there was much water there."[3] The springs rise in open ground amidst bare and unattractive hills, and flow down the slope, through a skirting of oleanders, in a strong brook which grows deeper on its way from the addition of numerous small streams. The village of Salem is a wretched collection of stone huts, square and flat-roofed, with a tree, large for Palestine, near them, enclosed within a stone wall for preservation, and with a few olives dotting the bare slopes. Looking westward, the eye crosses the great plain and travels up the valley of Shechem, but around Salem itself there is nothing at all attractive. To make the

[1] 1 Kings xii. 16. [2] 1 Kings xii. 25. [3] John iii. 23.

identification with John's Salem complete, there is a village called Ainun four miles north of the principal stream. With abundant water flowing all the year round, a central position, free space for the crowds, and a situation on the edge of the descent to the Jordan, of which the waters of the neighbourhood are, south of the plain of Esdraelon, the main tributary on the west, no position more favourable in every way could have been chosen by the Baptist for his work. That he once raised his earnest voice in regions now so silent and forlorn, casts an interest over the landscape more powerful than it could otherwise have had, even had it possessed great natural attractions.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE CITY OF SAMARIA.

Breaking up our encampment at Shechem, where, by the way, we had a formal visit from the commandant of the garrison, with its usual accompaniment of coffee and idle talk, we took the road to the town of Samaria, up the valley to the west. As we left, some weavers were busy at their looms, flinging the shuttle hither and thither, as they did when Job spoke of his days being swifter than its restless flight.[1] Some fig-trees were in full leaf, although it was so early as the 14th of March; others were not yet green, but the olives were arrayed in all their beauty, for they keep their foliage all the year round. A little way out of Shechem the water in the centre of the very narrow glen ran to the west, driving a mill. The slopes on each side were beautifully green; and, as we advanced, streams from the hills swelled that in the valley till the mills became so frequent that one might fancy they were there to mark the miles. After a time our way turned nearly north, up a gentle slope which had no brook, and for some distance the ground was covered with stones and thorny bushes. Villages on the rounded hill-tops, bedded in green fields and groves of olives, looked down on us from the south before we left the valley, but there was less beauty around those on its northern side. The broad bald ridge was ere long

[1] Job vii. 6.

passed, and we descended, once more, to a fertile valley, watered by gurgling brooks. A fine mill and orchards of pear-trees marked the village nearest Samaria, and for a long time before we reached our destination all the hill-sides were clad with fig and olive orchards. It took us about two hours to go from Shechem to the old capital of the northern kingdom.

The beauty of the country round the city of Samaria abundantly justifies Omri's choice. It is lovely on all sides, but especially towards the south. In every direction hills of soft velvet-green, terraced step above step to the top, give the eye a delightful feast. The hill of Samaria rises from 400 to 500 feet above the valley, and is isolated on all sides except the east, where it sinks into a narrow ridge about 200 feet below the general level, and running towards Ebal. A circle of green hills looks down upon it, but it must have been almost impregnable in the early ages, for it stands up apart like a great boss on a buckler, with steep ascents affording easy defence from any attack. To starve the population into submission must have been the only way to take it, if it resolved to hold out. Ascending by a rather steep path through the modern village, a poor collection of ill-built huts, we pitched our tents on a flat space on the top of the hill, used as the threshing-floor by the villagers, and proceeded to walk round the summit, and also to visit the ruined Church of St. John, at the entrance to the place. This fine relic is a striking memorial of Crusading genius and energy, though a portion of it is now degraded into a mosque. A palm was growing in its courtyard, and on the edge of the hill were fragments of an old wall of squared stones. The church, of which the south-eastern portion is the best preserved, lay immediately to the right of this wall. Admission into

the once sacred enclosure was easily obtained. Slabs of marble still paved the ground, and others, with effaced crosses, were at many places built into the walls. The very doorsill was marble. Pillars of marble stood along the court, half their circle projecting out of the walls, with capitals carved into palm-leaves. The mosque is built inside the shell of the church, and is in no way worth notice for its own sake, though the marble slabs in the walls with their sacred emblems obliterated cannot fail to speak to the heart of a Christian. A dark stair of twenty-one steps leads down to a cave in which there are five modern tombs, three of them with holes in the plaster to let one look in, with the help of a light, although there is nothing whatever to be seen inside. St. John the Baptist and Obadiah are said to have been buried here, but the tradition has no reliable foundation.

The building was the creation of the Knights of St. John, in honour of their patron the Baptist, whom they, at any rate, believed to lie here; and they evidently set themselves to rear an edifice which should be half fortalice and half temple. It was touching to observe the fine arches falling to pieces, and to see decay on every side, even the mosque which has risen like a fungus within not escaping the ravages of time: a picture, one might have said, of death glorying in its triumph over once vigorous life! The constant recurrence of such splendid ruins in every part of the country shows that during the two hundred years of the Crusades—a time as long as from the Revolution of 1688 to the present day—Palestine must have been almost as thickly covered with churches as England is now, and in very many cases the structures were as fine in architecture, and often as large, as our noblest ecclesiastical edifices—the cathedrals alone excepted. The

Holy Land, in fact, like Egypt, Northern Africa, and Asia Minor, is a province which has been lost to Christ, after having once been won for Him by the zeal of His followers: lost, and when to be won back? The bounds of Christendom have often been changed since the apostles died, and not always in the right direction; for though the Romans took care, in their grand heathen pride, that their god Terminus should never draw back from a spot once pressed by his foot, the Church has not honoured its Lord in Heaven by as resolutely maintaining His conquests.

The mud huts which compose the village cling to the slope facing the church; traces of the glory of old times appearing among them, here and there, in pillar-shafts, marble pedestals, and fragments of carved marble mouldings. The terrace on which our tents were pitched had evidently been artificially levelled—when, by whom, or for what purpose, who can tell? There could hardly, however, be a finer threshing-floor; and for this purpose it is accordingly used. Here the great temple of Baal, so famous in Jezebel's time, may once have stood, huge in size—for it was served by 450 priests—and so fortified in its Holy of holies, where stood the glittering image of the god, that that part was spoken of as his castle.[1] On the west edge of the hill, in some ploughed land, stand fifteen weathered limestone pillars, without capitals or architrave, perhaps the last relics of the temple built by Herod in honour of Augustus. They form, as a whole, an oblong, gaunt and spectral now that they are robbed of all their ornament, but once the glory of the city. "In the middle of the town," says Josephus, "Herod left an open space of a stadium[2] and a half in [circuit],

[1] 1 Kings xvi. 32; xviii. 19, 22; 2 Kings x. 17 ff.; x. 25 ("the city" = the castle); Jer. xxiii. 13.

[2] A stadium = a furlong.

and here he built a temple to the honour of Augustus, which was famous for its size and beauty." To the south, the edge of the plateau and the slopes were overshadowed by thick groves of figs and olives, which reached far away down the valley of Nakurah and up the hills on its farther side. Among these, ploughs were in many places busy, while in others the earth was green with rising crops; the soil everywhere inviting industry. Pillars, or broken fragments of pillars, and cut stones lay around, and there were fragments of pottery over the whole surface of the hill. Beyond the temple site, the ground rose, without trees, in a wide terrace which was everywhere tilled; but this, the eastern, being the weakest side, the whole slope had been made into three steep embankments, one below the other; hard to climb at any time, terrible to surmount in the face of an enemy defending them from behind walls.

The neighbouring hills, like the one I have been describing, were soft and rounded, with glimpses of peaceful valleys between. I was standing at an elevation of 1,450 feet above the sea, but a few miles off, to the east, was a summit 790 feet higher, while two miles off, to the north, was one 925 feet above me. These, however, were the giants of the circle; the others are either slightly lower than the hill of Samaria, or very little higher; but all alike, with the valleys at their feet, are covered with the softest green. On the south lay Nakurah, embosomed among figs and olives, and more than ten other villages crowned various heights around, while on the west the horizon was girt by a long gleaming strip of "the Great Sea." Isaiah had looked on the same landscape when Samaria was in its glory, and had carried away the recollection of its hill as "the glorious crown of Ephraim, the flower of its winning beauty, standing up over its rich

valley;"[1] but its glory has long disappeared. Where kings once lived in palaces faced with ivory, and nobles in mansions of squared stones;[2] where the royal tombs raised their proud heads over the successors of Omri;[3] where grew a grove of Astarte, and a great temple to her rose at the will of Jezebel;[4] where the huge fane of Baal was the cathedral of idolatry for the apostate tribes; where Elisha lived at the foot of the hill, but inside the fortifications;[5] where Hosea preached year after year through his long and faithful career—there was now only a ploughed field. As I returned from my walk round the broad top of the hill, the sheikh and ten or twelve of the chief men of the village came up, and, sitting down on the ground beside an old dry stone wall, on the edge of the great threshing-floor, asked me to tell them the history of the place. In turbans, and in flowing "abbas" with green, red, or blue stripes—for the inhabitants of the ancient site affect bright colours—they listened with the greatest interest while I repeated the story of their hill from the days of Omri to the fall of the city.

The founder of Samaria must have been a man of genius, to give up the fair but defenceless Thirza and choose such a position as this for his capital, so much more fertile and so much stronger; a fair-dealing man withal, for he bought the site honestly;[6] a man given to the Hebrew custom of playing on words, as seen by his changing the name of the city from that of its former owner, Shemer, to "Shomeron," "the Wartburg," or "Watch Fort," commanding as it did the roads from

[1] Isa. xxviii. 1. Mühlau's translation.

[2] Isa ix. 10; Amos iii. 15; Ps. xlv. 8; 1 Kings xxii. 39; 2 Kings xv. 25 ("castle of the king's palace").

[3] 1 Kings xvi. 28; xxii. 37; 2 Kings x. 35; xiii. 9, 13; xiv. 16.

[4] 2 Kings xiii. 6 ("grove").

[5] 2 Kings v. 9; vi. 32; xiii. 14.

[6] 1 Kings xvi. 24.

the north. But it had to stand many a siege. Already, in Omri's day, the jealous Syrian king, Benhadad I., compelled the surrender of some of its bazaars to his Damascus traders.[1] Under Ahab, it was beleaguered by Benhadad II., and only delivered by a brave sally, when, fortunately for Israel, Benhadad and his high officers were "drinking themselves drunk in their tents"[2]—an early lesson in favour of total abstinence. But it was under Joram that it had its sorest trial, at the hands of Benhadad III., so dire a famine resulting that men were glad to buy the head of an ass—the part of an animal which no Oriental would touch in ordinary times—for eighty pieces of silver, or more than £8; while the fourth part of a "cab," about half a pint, of dove's dung—used perhaps, as Josephus suggests, in lieu of salt for seasoning, unless, as seems more probable, the name was applied to some inferior kind of vegetable food, a bean perhaps, since the Arabs now call one seed they eat "sparrow's dung"[3]—sold for over ten shillings;[4] and mothers, in despair, killed their own children and boiled them for food. And who can tell what this hill must have seen of agony in the three years' siege, before the Assyrians under Sargon forced their way in, to carry off into captivity the survivors of the assault?[5]

Founded as a military despotism, the northern kingdom, like all communities, had remained true to the spirit of its origin. Revolution had been a passion from the beginning, and with it every element of social degeneracy and decay had kept pace. The sway of a rough soldiery alternated with the luxury of a heathen court, until violence, lawlessness, immorality, and self-indulgence brought all to ruin. A few were possessed of great wealth, often

[1] 1 Kings xx. 34.
[2] 1 Kings xx. 16.
[3] Gesenius, *Lex.*, 8te Auf.
[4] 2 Kings vi. 25, 29.
[5] 2 Kings xvii. 5.

secured by foul means, and the mass of the people were at once vicious and in misery, so that the State was left helpless, in spite of a superficial air of prosperity maintained by the upper class to the last. Samaria grew sick unto death long before it fell, and the prophets only proclaimed what must have been patent to all thinking men when they foretold its overthrow at the hand of Assyria, then striding on to universal empire in Western Asia.[1] But their words have had a wonderfully literal fulfilment, especially those of Micah, when he says, in his prophetic vision, "I will make Samaria a mire-heap of the field: I will turn it into vineyard plantations: I will roll down its stones into the valley beneath, and make bare its foundations. All its carved images of stone will be shattered to pieces, all the wealth in its temples, got by its temple-harlots, will be burned with fire, and the site of its idol statues will I make desolate."[2] It seems, indeed, as though a special curse rested on the city once desecrated by idolatry. Its splendid position ever invited rebuilding afresh, and all things seemed to promise a vigorous restoration of its prosperity, but each time the annihilating blow came, and that before long. The Maccabæan, John Hyrcanus, destroyed the city utterly, as he had destroyed the temple on Gerizim. But even after that it was speedily rebuilt, and in Herod's day was specially favoured. Besides rearing the temple of which we have spoken, he restored its fortifications, and it owes to him its present name—Sebastieh—for he called it Sebaste, "the August," in servile flattery of his imperial patron at Rome. In the valley around there are still the remains of his grand colonnade of stately pillars, which were once shaded, doubtless, by figs and olives, and perhaps linked by

[1] Amos iii. 12; Hos. xiv. 1; Isa. viii. 4; Micah i. 6.

[2] Micah i. 6, 7. Translation in Geikie's *Hours with the Bible*, iv. 353.

wreaths, and which lined both sides of a raised terrace apparently encircling the hill, thus forming a stately walk and drive from fifty to a hundred feet broad. Of all this glory, only lines of weathered columns at intervals remain, many standing, but some fallen. For centuries Samaria has been a poor peasant-village. Under the smiling green around lies buried its great past, so romantic, so sad!

Descending the hill at the south side, I came upon the remains of two round towers, evidently marking the defences of a gateway which stood high above the valley. A fine road led to them, and on both sides of this road were to be seen remains of the great colonnade. This southern slope is even steeper than those on the north and west. Walking on, I found patches of wilderness amidst the strips of sown land, as is everywhere the case in Palestine; the population not being numerous enough to use more than a small proportion of the soil. Stretches of Christ-thorn and other worthless growths flourished up to the very edge of spots from the black soil of which were springing vigorous grain crops. In such a region if the wretched Turkish Government, instead of caring for nothing but itself, were thoughtful and public-spirited, it might soon attract people enough to turn the wilderness into a fruitful field. But where there is no public conscience in the rulers, what can be done for a country? The peasants, though they bear an indifferent name, are strong, well-grown, industrious people, full of energy and life—the raw material of a prosperous nation, if they only had a chance of showing of what they are capable. Under such a rule as that of England in India, they would soon restore Palestine to all its former glory. Meanwhile, Samaria, with all its natural fertility, brings before one vividly, in its half-tilled and half-waste condition, the threatenings of the prophet: "All the land shall become

briers and thorns, and on all the hills, that should be dug with the mattock, thou shalt not go, for fear of the briers and thorns."[1]

Leprosy, it appears, is still common in this neighbourhood, as it was in the days of Elisha, when there were "many lepers in Israel;"[2] and it is still common, also, in Damascus, whence Naaman came to this place to be healed by the prophet. The practice of shutting lepers outside a city, though now modified at Jerusalem so far as to allow them to live just inside one of the gates, seems to have been in force in ancient times, if we may judge from the story of the great siege by Benhadad III.

[1] Isa. vii. 24, 25. [2] Luke iv. 27.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DOTHAN, GILBOA, SHUNEM.

The first village north of Samaria was Burka, the road to which lay across the valley and up the slope between two of the hills beyond. The morning was bright and warm, and amid such fertile scenery it was easy to understand the love which Ephraim had for his native soil. As we rode slowly up the ascent great flocks of vultures sailed overhead, on the look-out for carrion—a dead animal, or offal. The number of birds of prey in the East and in Southern Europe is quite surprising. I have seen five or six sparrow-hawks at a time hovering over the Acropolis at Athens, ready to pounce upon some of the little birds; and here at Samaria the vultures were past my counting. It was the same in Bible times, for we find no fewer than fifteen Hebrew names of predaceous birds: some applied to the whole class; others the names of particular species. The power of sight in all of them is amazing. If an animal die or be slaughtered after sunrise, a vulture is sure to make its appearance in a few minutes, though there was no sign of one in the heavens before, and in rapid succession another and another will arrive, till the air is darkened with the multitude of griffon and other vultures, eagles, kites, buzzards, and ravens. It is still true that "wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together."[1]

[1] Matt. xxiv. 28; Luke xvii. 37.

The sight of one vulture in downward flight seems to be the signal to others, who come on in endless succession, some of them from vast distances, so that we can easily believe the statement that during a war all the vultures of widely remote provinces are gathered, to wait for their horrible banquets. When Micah says to the people of Judah, "Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle,"[1] he refers to the griffon-vulture, the head and neck of which are bare of all but down. It is to this bird that the rapacious invader of Babylon is compared when he is spoken of as "a ravenous bird from the east:"[2] a simile especially apt when we remember that the griffon-vulture was the emblem of Persia, emblazoned on its standard. The age to which the whole class of carrion-feeders lives is very great; instances having been known of an eagle surviving in captivity for over 100 years. It was natural, therefore, that the Psalmist should say, "Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."[3] The strength of wing and swiftness of flight of the eagle often supply metaphors to the sacred writers,[4] but no passage is more striking than that in Deuteronomy which alludes to the tenderness with which they care for their young: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him."[5] Sir Humphry Davy, speaking of a pair of golden eagles which he watched while they were thus employed, says, "I once saw a very interesting sight above the crags of Ben Nevis. Two parent eagles were teaching their offspring, two young birds, the manœuvres of flight. They

[1] Mic. i. 16. [2] Isa. xlvi. 11. [3] Ps. ciii. 5.
[4] Ezek. xvii. 3; Isa. xl. 31; Job ix. 26; Deut. xxviii. 49; Lam. iv. 19; 2 Sam. i. 23. [5] Deut. xxxii. 11, 12.

began by rising from the top of the mountain, in the eye of the sun. It was about midday, and bright for the climate. They at first made small circles, and the young birds imitated them. They paused on their wings, waiting till they had made their flight, and then took a second and larger gyration, always rising towards the sun, and enlarging their circle of flight, so as to make a gradually ascending spiral. The young ones still slowly followed, apparently flying better as they mounted, and they continued this sublime exercise, always rising, till they became mere points in the air, and the young ones were lost, and afterwards their parents, to our aching sight."

For a time, the hills which we passed were covered with olives, the stems of some showing them to be very old—perhaps the growth of centuries. In Judæa to some extent, but nearly everywhere here, in the territory of Ephraim, the words of Scripture were still vindicated: "Thou shalt have olive-trees throughout all thy coasts."[1] Up hill and down, the road wound on to Jeba, a village well built of stone on a hill-side, the houses rising row above row, so that the flat roofs of the line below seemed to form a street before those above. It stands in the midst of countless olives, with hills rising on all sides, except to the north-east, where there was a broad valley covered with rising grain. Many villages were to be seen on high points, for they are very rarely found in the insecure plains. While we were crossing the higher parts of the route the Mediterranean was in sight, but a wild confusion of hills concealed the maritime lowlands; in the parts nearer to us, however, there were openings into various fruitful valleys. The tops of the hills on our road were lonely and wholly untilled, but there was a

[1] Deut. xxviii. 40.

great deal of succulent green about, showing that the soil was naturally fertile.

Sanur, the next village on the journey, is a strong place on a steep and rocky hill, which guards the entrance to a considerable plain, known as "the Meadow of Drowning," the want of natural drainage turning it into a swamp in May or June. In the green fields men, women, and children were weeding the grain, such of the weeds as were of use being carried home for fodder, while the rest were gathered together into bundles and burnt.[1] The hill of Sanur is very steep on the east, but on the west sinks gradually towards the hills in that direction. A little fortress crowns the top, and stone walls run along the slope outside the houses; only one door offering entrance. At the top of the slow ascent through rich vineyards, orchards of olives and figs, and fields of grain, a fountain was flowing from below an arch, the water in part running to waste down the hill. Numbers of women were busy cleaning linen with wooden mallets; others were getting water, some of them passing us with their jars on their shoulders or heads. A string of camels, with great bales sticking out on each side, stalked down the hill beyond, taking up all the track, which the water has washed into great roughness, though here and there the Roman pavement was still in position—for this was an old Roman road.

Approaching the village of Kabatiyeh, we passed over part of the plain of Dothan, the scene of the sale of Joseph to the Midianites. At one place was a well called "the Well of the Pit," perhaps a memorial of the poor lad's fate, and not very far from it a second, with a water-trough, the two accounting for the name Dothan, which means "the Two Wells." Above them, to the north, rose a green hill, overlooking the wide plain in which the sons

[1] Matt. xiii. 30.

of Jacob pastured their flocks,[1] while to the west stretched out the dark-coloured plain of Arrabeh, and beyond it the road to Egypt, along which the Midianite caravan led their newly-bought young Syrian slave. A gazelle broke away on our left as we passed, and was chased by our dragoman, but he might as well have followed the wind. The tiny creature was up a neighbouring slope and out of sight, as it were in a moment. Hermon had been visible in all its radiant whiteness from the high points of the day's travel. Daisies, broom, and hawthorn dotted the untilled parts of the valleys. Another string of camels, laden with charcoal, going to Nablus, crossed Dothan while we were passing over its green and black breadth, picturesquely shut in by low verdant hills. To the east, as we approached the village of Kabatiyeh, a thick wood of olives, many of them very old trees, covered the hollow plains and the slopes on each side, while before us a narrow opening in the hills led to the great plain of Esdraelon, soon to come partially in sight, with the hills of Galilee beyond it. The defile to the plain was, however, longer than one could have wished, over such a road. The hills, now close to us on both sides, were rough, though not high, and the track was often very broken. In two or three miles of constant descent we went down nearly, or quite, 1,000 feet. It was, apparently, by this pass that Azariah of Judah fled before the men sent by Jehu to kill him, for though we do not know "the going up to Gur," it is said to have been "by Ibleam,"[2] which was in all likelihood identical with the Wady Belameh, the very gorge through which we were slowly descending. Two strong brooks flowed down to Esdraelon at different points on the way, and the slopes, rough and broken, were yellow with the flowers of the broom.

[1] Gen. xxxvii. 17. [2] 2 Kings ix. 27.

Jenin, the ancient Engannim—"the Fountain of the Gardens"—lying at the south end of the great plain, is a place of some importance for Palestine, with a small bazaar, or place for selling and buying. A tall minaret, some palm-trees, rich orangeries, clumps of tamarisks, cactus-hedges, two or three white domes of a mosque, and a delightful richness of green, are its most striking characteristics, not to speak of its exceptional richness in water. They say it has 3,000 inhabitants, but I doubt it. A fine stream runs through the town, and waters the gardens and fields outside, finally breaking into rivulets which join one or other of the feeble sources ultimately united to form the Kishon. The water from the fountain which enriches the town and neighbourhood rises out of the ground near the mosque, and is led off in an open stone conduit, built for the first few yards on low stone arches. East of the town rises the stony range of Gilboa, encircling a considerable plain; to the north stretches out, as far as the eye can reach, the brown rolling plain of Esdraelon, brightened with spots of green; and three miles beyond it are the hills from which the white houses of Nazareth look down. Nearer at hand is the cone of the extinct volcano of Jebel Duhy, while to the west the view is closed by the broad shoulder of Carmel.

From Jenin to the hills below Nazareth is fourteen miles due north; from Zerin, the ancient Jezreel, on the western slope of Gilboa, to Ledjun, the ancient Legio, which lies nearly west of Zerin, is about nine miles. These distances give the size of the plain in two directions, while from Zerin to the hills which cross the plain, near the spot on the Carmel range where Elijah met the priests of Baal, is fourteen miles, in a north-western direction, and from Jenin they are seventeen miles off, to the north-west. Such an open space is not to be found elsewhere

in Palestine, and hence it has always been the great battle-ground of the country, from the days of Thothmes III. and Rameses II. to those of Napoleon I. The soil is dark-coloured lava, worn into dust in the lapse of many ages, and is extremely fertile, though for want of population much less is made of it than might be. Seamed in every direction with small water-courses, the plain drains the hills on all sides, and gradually unites their winter floods or spring rain into the Kishon, one of the shortest rivers in the world, if indeed it is to be called a river, for though sometimes rolling in a wild and dangerous tumult of waves, it is often dry, except perhaps at the marshy bar towards its mouth.

"The Mountains of Gilboa" are naturally the first point to which one turns his thoughts at Jenin, lying, as they do, so near at hand. Bedouins had pitched their black tents in the quiet recess among the mountains east of the town, as they have done over the plain, more or less, since the earliest history. To such wanderers, accustomed only to the short-lived "pastures of the wilderness," the attractions of a mighty oasis like Esdraelon are hardly less than those of some Island of the Blessed to voyagers on the ocean waste. Again and again since the days of Gideon, and doubtless long before them, it has been covered with their camels "like the sand which is by the sea-shore innumerable," when war, famine, or the desire of rich quarters has brought them across the Jordan. So late, indeed, as 1870, they were so numerous that only about one-sixth of the plain was tilled for fear of them; but Turkish cavalry, armed with repeating rifles, taught the lawless invaders such a lesson that they fled to their deserts, whence, however, they return as often as the weakness of the Government gives an opportunity. Thus in 1877, when Turkey was in a death-struggle with

Russia, they reappeared in great numbers, and levied black-mail on the defenceless peasants, but since then they have been afraid to venture on such predatory incursions. The area of cultivation is consequently extending now that safety seems more assured, but much land is still covered with thistles and rank wild growths. Growing corn, millet, sesame, cotton, tobacco, and much besides, with magnificent returns, the soil only wants population to turn it to profit. There are splendid perennial springs on the west; and even in the hot months water enough is running to waste below the hills to irrigate almost any extent of surface. With such a soil, practically inexhaustible, what returns might be obtained!

It is not pleasant to pass close to the wild sons of the desert, whose estimate of the value of human life is cynically low; but the swarthy Arabs did us no harm—from fear, no doubt, rather than from conscience. As one looked north, the whole of the magnificent plain seemed green, but peasants were still busy ploughing and sowing. Fertility, either wild or cultivated, reigned over all the undulations around; but the hills to the right and left, and the Galilæan mountains beyond, to the north, were in their upper tracts stony and barren. The little village of Jelbon—a very wretched place, more than 500 feet above Jenin, from which it lies about seven miles east—marks the beginning of the isolated mass of Gilboa, which rises in a great number of summits to the north and west: the highest of them being over 1,600 feet above the sea, or nearly 500 feet higher than Jelbon. The poverty of the defenceless peasants was a commentary on the presence of the villainous Arabs in their neighbourhood. To the north of their hamlet, strips of thorns and thistles alternated with patches of cultivation; oak-scrub covering the steep slopes, while countless wild

flowers were growing in every spot open to the sun. Here and there water still lay in small clefts of the rocks, but the whole aspect of the hills was desolate and forbidding; the bare rock, split into thick beds of loose stones, standing out everywhere through the brown and russet of the stunted and twisted brush. One could not help thinking of the words in the lamentation of David over Saul and Jonathan—"Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields from which offerings may be taken; for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil."[1] The panorama from the heights was very fine. To the east lay a green plain dotted with the black tents of the Bedouins. The sunken channel of the Jordan, here more than six miles broad, stretched away to the river, which was flowing already at a depth of over 700 feet below the sea; but Bethshan, the modern Beisan, which lies in this locality, was not visible. Across the winding bed of the stream, which could be seen for a long distance, rose the noble mountains of Gilead, and when one turned his back on them, the great sweep of Esdraelon wearied the eye with its details, while to the north the mountains of Lebanon, with snowy Hermon ever towering above all, mingled the earth with the heavens.

The way now again led west, over a very rough road, up, down, and across glens, plains, and slopes, to the village of Deir Guzaleh. From a distance Gilboa appears one great mass, but it is a network of hills. Arraneh, west of Deir Guzaleh, on the spur north of Jenin, boasts of a good spring, and of some olives and other trees within cactus-hedges, and lies on the road from Jenin to Zerin, which is about four miles to the north. Facing

[1] 2 Sam. i. 21.

the great plain, this side of Gilboa was, in all probability, the scene of Saul's defeat by the Philistines. As we know, he pitched his tents, before the fatal battle, by the "fountain which is in Jezreel"[1]—a full spring flowing out in front of the modern village. A number of cisterns still found at different points as you go north speak of a much denser population in other times; some of them, including a tank thirty-seven paces broad, occurring at spots now, and perhaps for ages, quite uninhabited and forsaken. The easy slopes of Gilboa along this side must have offered little hindrance to the Philistine chariots, which had already made their way to Esdraelon over much rougher ground, and could easily pursue the fugitive Hebrews until they were utterly scattered.

Jezreel stood, in olden times, on a knoll 500 feet above the sea, and about 100 feet above the plain. On the south the ascent is very gradual, but on the north and north-east the slopes are steep and rugged. Crossing the knoll, you come unexpectedly, in the valley on the northern side, upon two springs, one Ain Jalud, the other Ain Tubâun, where the Crusaders are said to have been miraculously fed for three days on the fish of the great springs of the neighbourhood. At both there is a pool—that of Ain Jalud about 100 yards long, with miry edges. Numbers of women were getting water, and flocks of sheep and goats were lying around. A girl, on my asking for a drink, instantly emptied her jar, and filling it afresh, held it up for me till I had had enough. The valley leading down to Beisan may be said to begin at Ain Jalud. It is about a mile across at Zerin, and then rises into a mass of hills seamed with broad valleys, but divided on the north from the hills of Galilee

[1] 1 Sam. xxix. 1.

beyond by a narrow but deep bay of the great plain. Of this triangle of hills Jebel Duhy, "the Leader," is the highest, rising in a lofty cone more than 1,000 feet above Jezreel.[1] The top is a mass of basalt fragments, memorials of primæval eruptions; it commands a magnificent view, stretching from Ebal to Safed, and from the sea to the great hills beyond the Haurân.

Little more than a mile south-west lies the village of Solam, the ancient Shunem, about 200 feet above the plain[2]—a poor hamlet of rough, flat-roofed stone huts, with some fruit-trees beside it—the centre of the Philistine position, before the battle of Gilboa.[3] It thus faced the army of Saul, which lay a little more than two miles off, to the south, with its back to Gilboa and its front towards the enemy on the north. Ravines leading south facilitated the approach of the foe, and the narrow plain in front, still more than the gentle slopes at the west of Gilboa, would expose the Israelites on both front and flank to the attack of the dreaded chariots. This was bad enough, but worse was to follow, for the astute Philistine general contrived to march at least part of his army to Aphek, the modern Fukua,[4] far to the rear of Saul's force, so that retreat in any direction was well-nigh impossible. The unhappy king was thus almost surrounded. With a mind full of superstitious fear, especially since the doom pronounced on himself and his house by the Prophet Samuel, a despairing trust in the necromancers whom he had shortly before hunted down[5] led him to set out, by night, to consult an old woman at Endor, a hamlet between two and three miles beyond

[1] Zerin, 462 feet above the sea; Jebel Duhy, 1,690 feet.

[2] Shunem, 440 feet above the sea; plain, at foot of the hill, 260 feet above the sea.

[3] 1 Sam. xxviii. 4. [4] 1 Sam. xxix. 1. [5] 1 Sam. xxviii. 3.

Shunem, at the foot of the northern face of the hills. He had thus to get past the Philistines, who lay between him and that place, and he must have crept and glided in the darkness, as he best could, behind every fold of the ground or shoulder of the hills, in fear at every turn of being caught by the enemy. The mud hovels of the modern Endor cling to the bare and stony hill-side, in which caves have been dug, apparently in recent times, for marl with which to mix up mortar. One, however, may well be ancient: that from which flows the perennial spring Ain Dor—"the Fountain of Dor"—which gives its name to the spot. We are wont to think of witches as associated with caves, but there is no ground for doing so in Saul's case. We only know that, when left unanswered by God, either "by dreams, by Urim, or by prophets,"[1] the unfortunate king met and consulted the sorceress somewhere near this fountain. Faint-hearted at the result of the unholy conference, and feeble from hunger, he was in no condition for the battle on the morrow. He could not retreat, for he had the steep northern face of the hills behind him, and perhaps it was while he had been away at Endor that the Philistines had moved south-east to Aphek, cutting him off from flight in that direction also, should he be defeated. The charge of the enemy thus found Israel well-nigh helpless, and resistance once overcome in front, the chariots had free sweep on the fugitives from the west, while the archers, spearmen, and other troops at Aphek could cut them off as they fled.

Shunem is famous not only for its connection with the battle of Gilboa, but for the touching story of the Shunammite woman and her son. The village consists of a few mud huts, with a garden of lemon-trees inside a

[1] 1 Sam. xxviii. 6.

cactus-hedge, and a fountain and trough. But it may have been more dignified in the days when it was proud of sending as a wife to King David the fairest virgin to be found in Israel.[1] The "aliyeh," or upper chamber, built for the Prophet Elisha, is a familiar feature in Palestine; such structures on the roof being very common.[2] The words of the kindly hostess may be translated, perhaps more correctly than in our version, "Let us make, I pray thee, a little upper chamber with walls," in contrast to the mere awnings of branches, with open sides, set up in summer on the roofs. Such was the "summer parlour" in which Eglon of Moab was sitting alone when he was murdered by Ehud;[3] and David betook himself to a similar one "over the gates" to weep for Absalom.[4] Thither, also, the broken-hearted widow of Zarephath[5] carried the corpse of her son and laid it out to await burial; for a stair to the roof, from the outside, makes access to the "aliyeh" easy, without going through the inner court on which the backs of all the houses open. Ahaz had altars to the heavenly bodies on the top of his "upper chamber."[6] There were also such rooms over the great porch of the Temple,[7] some of them very gorgeous, for they were overlaid with gold,[8] and we find such "aliyehs" in the new streets of Jerusalem when Nehemiah was rebuilding it,[9] just as we find them there now. The Shunammite lady's house must have been of a superior class to have such a structure raised upon it, though the accommodation may not, after all, have been very imposing. But with its pallet—perhaps a palm-leaf or straw mat—its table, its stool, its lamp, and the free access to it possible

[1] 1 Kings i. 3.
[2] 2 Kings iv. 10.
[3] Judg. iii. 20, 23—25.
[4] 2 Sam. xviii. 33.
[5] 1 Kings xvii. 17, 19.
[6] 2 Kings xxiii. 12.
[7] 1 Chron. xxviii. 11.
[8] 2 Chron. iii. 9.
[9] Neh. iii. 31.

at all times from the outer stairs, it was no doubt a delightful haven of rest to the prophet on his journeys from Carmel, where as a rule he lived, to his native hamlet Abel Meholah, "the Meadow of Dancing," now called Ain Helweh,[1] in the Jordan valley, twelve or thirteen miles below Beisan. The poor woman must have found it a very long ride to Carmel, under the burning glow of a harvest sun,[2] with no shade at any point, as she urged her ass over the weary plain, which to her no doubt seemed endless that day. But a mother's love can bear up a frail body under a terrible strain.

[1] See *Tent Work in Palestine.* [2] 2 Kings iv. 24.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BEISAN, JEZREEL, NAIN.

The Wady Jalud, which leads down to Beisan, is about twelve miles long, sinking about 800 feet before it reaches that place, the Bethshan of the Bible. The modern village and the ruins of the once famous city stand on the crest of a slope, which is about 300 feet above the steep side of the sunken channel of the Jordan, to which it descends. The open space around the ancient city is about six miles from east to west, but the eastern spurs of Gilboa approach close to the north of the ruins. The valley by which the descent is made from Zerin, or Jezreel, is from half a mile to a mile in breadth, gradually widening as it nears the open country. On the southern side of the valley the hills round off two miles before reaching Beisan, and trend south, at a distance of from four to five miles from the Jordan, leaving a long and broad plain of surpassing fertility at their base. The stream of Ain Jalud runs down the valley from Zerin, and there are many other streamlets which flow through the Beisan meadows, turning them, over a wide space, into very marshy ground, though the remains of ancient aqueducts show that in former times they were utilised for irrigation. The descent of the valley is very rough, and as the open plain is, except in small spots, quite in a state of nature, the past greatness of the locality is in large measure left to the imagination. A huge mound, or "tell," the site of the ancient Bethshan, rises to a height of

about 100 feet near the foot of the northern hills. The modern village is a miserable hamlet of about sixty mud huts, built on the south-east corner of the ancient site, with a marshy rivulet making its slow way through the place. The circumference of the ancient city could not have been less than two or three miles, for the whole hill is covered with ruins, the character of which proves that in later times Bethshan must have been a city of temples; pillars which once belonged to such buildings being numerous. The stones of these, and indeed of all the ruins, are of black basalt; the great "tell" itself being apparently the basaltic cone, partly worn away, of an ancient volcano. An amphitheatre, portions of which are in almost perfect preservation, can still be traced along a semicircle of nearly 200 feet, though the rank weeds grow high over the stones. The Jalud long ago wore for itself a deep channel just below the "tell," and is still crossed by a fine Roman arch. Thick walls, perhaps those on which the bodies of Saul and Jonathan were hung up, once surrounded the top of the hill, possibly enclosing the city of those early times. It was a boldly venturous deed of the men of Jabesh Gilead to come by night and carry off the dishonoured remains, and it shows that Saul's bravery in once rescuing their city had not been forgotten by its inhabitants.[1] Just west of the modern village, almost buried in the soil and weeds, another memorial of Roman days may be traced—the remains of a great oblong circus or hippodrome, 280 feet in length and over 150 feet broad. Ancient walls can be made out round the whole "tell," at a wide distance from it, marking the limits of the city when under the Romans it had grown to great dimensions. The name it then bore was Scythopolis, the origin of which is not clearly known.

[1] 1 Sam. xi. 4—11; xxxi. 12.

It was by the fords near Bethshan, and by the ascent of Ain Jalud, that the Midianites entered the great upper plain in the days of Gideon. Bethshan had then long been a town or village, for it is mentioned in the travels of a Mohar in the days of Rameses II., the oppressor of the Hebrews in Egypt.[1] There are a number of fords over the Jordan in the Beisan plain, by any of which the fierce Ishmaelites may have crossed; among others that of Abarah, apparently the Bethabara where John baptized.[2] The oldest manuscripts, indeed, have "Bethany" instead of Bethabara, but Bathania—"Soft Soil"—was the name of Bashan in the time of Christ, and thus Bethabara was in Bethany, so that both readings are correct, and at first were probably both in the sacred text. Critics have made a great point of the supposed error of the Evangelist, in speaking of "Bethany" as being "beyond Jordan," but they have only shown by their acuteness the worthlessness of many of the clever points supposed to be made against the Gospels.

Streaming over some of these fords, "the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east" forced their way up the Wady-el-Jalud, and spread themselves over Esdraelon, "with their cattle and their tents, as grasshoppers for multitude, for both they and their camels were without number."[3] The scene of Gideon's victory must have been near the descent to Beisan; the description of the battle, the flight, and the pursuit pointing to this; but there has been question of late years as to the exact locality of Ain Harod—"the Spring of Trembling." Gideon was encamped, we read, on Mount Gilead,[4] which, in this case, must be understood as Mount Jalud—some portion of the mass of the Gilboa hills, whether at the

[1] See Vol. I., p. 36.
[2] John i. 28.
[3] Judg. vi. 3—5.
[4] Judg. vii. 3.

upper or lower end of the great wady is not known. The spring Jalud, near Zerin, or Jezreel, has generally been recognised as the scene of Gideon's test of the quality of his followers, but Captain Conder is in favour of Ain-el-Jemain, "the Fountain of the Two Troops," a large spring at the foot of the hills where they trend to the south, on the under corner of the wady, exactly west of Beisan. Gideon's force, encamped on the hills above the sloping valley, consisted of men of Manasseh, his own tribe, and of Zebulun, Naphtali, and Asher, from the north of the great plain, the districts most affected by the invaders, though troops of Arabs had scoured the land even so far south as Gaza.[1] Having winnowed his little band of heroes of all faint hearts by the test imposed at "the Spring of Trembling," Gideon could count on them. Yet, before acting, he resolved to see for himself the condition of the enemy. Descending by night the low slope of the hill in the folds of which his men were hidden, he crept, with his servant, towards the vast encampment. The valley was full of the tents of the Arabs, and both within and around these multitudes slept, with their numberless camels at rest in their midst. A dream of one of the host told to his fellow—how a barley cake, which had rolled down from the hills above, had struck and overthrown one of the tents—seemed an omen of success, on hearing which Gideon stole back to the heights to organise his attack. Dividing his three hundred men into three companies, he provided each man with a torch, the burning end of which he was to hide within an earthen pitcher, as is still done in Egypt by the watchmen; with their swords at their sides, and trumpets in their hands, they were to march silently to three points, which were, perhaps, situated on each side of the valley at the head of the gorge, and thus to the west

[1] Judg. vi. 4.

of the host; and at a given signal they were to break the jars, swing the torches into brightness, peal a great blast from each trumpet, and raise the terrible war-cry of Israel. Sentinels are unknown in Arab armies, nor were there any pickets to prevent the three hundred from approaching close. Awakened in a moment, through all its length, by the echoing shouts; alarmed by the seemingly countless lights moving on all sides; confused by the wild triumphant flourishes of the war-horns—the vast multitude, unprepared for attack, fled this way and that, with loud cries that increased the dismay. Each saw a foe in his neighbour, for darkness made it impossible to know one from another. Flight seemed the only safety. The steep descent to the Jordan was the way to their native wilderness, and down it they rushed in headlong rout, some south by Abel Meholah, across the Jordan fords; others by the fords at Bethabara, beyond Beisan, and those in the same locality near it: the foe close at their heels till they had reached the recesses of the eastern desert. Two of their emirs—Oreb, "the Raven," and Zeeb, "the Wolf"—were slain by the way; while Zebah and Zalmunna, their two principal leaders, fell in a second battle, in the wilderness. The men of Peniel and Succoth, who had refused to help in the pursuit, felt the vengeance of their brethren when the final triumph had been secured, their elders being whipped with the thorny branches of the acacia, a punishment under which they, in all likelihood, died. Thus ended the most signal victory ever wrought in Israel.

Jezreel and its neighbourhood are famous for yet other incidents in the history of the Tribes. It was near this city that in later years the best king Judah ever had, met an early death. The northern kingdom had already been destroyed, and Egypt, under Pharaoh Necho, was

eager to win back Western Asia from the now feeble hands of Assyria. Josiah, himself coveting the territory of the Ten Tribes, or perhaps desirous to be loyal to Nineveh, his ally, madly resolved, against all advice, to bar the progress of the Egyptian army that had marched up the sea-coast plain and entered Esdraelon, on its way to Lebanon and the Euphrates[1] Pharaoh had generously urged him not to expose himself to defeat, and had disclaimed all intention of injuring him; but he rushed on his fate, and fell, sore wounded by the archers, in the plain of Megiddo, near a place known as Hadadrimmon, apparently after the name of the chief Syrian god—Rimmon, "the Thunderer." Removed from his war-chariot to a second which was kept in reserve, and was perhaps more suitable for an ambulance, he was carried to Jerusalem to die. The disaster was appalling for Judah, for he was scarcely forty years of age, and had shown himself a splendid king. The nation forthwith began to decline. Loud and terrible was the wailing for the slain monarch; so terrible, that Zechariah can imagine no language more fitted to picture the wailing of the House of David and of Jerusalem when they look on Him whom they have pierced, than by saying that "there shall be a great lamentation and mourning, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo."[2] So deep, indeed, had the remembrance of the great battle sunk into the heart of the Jew, that St. John gives the name of Armageddon—"the Hill of Megiddo"—to the gathering-place of the kings of the earth for the final decisive battle against the kingdom of God.[3] No wonder the Chronicler tells us that "all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah," and that Jeremiah, in a lost book, "lamented for Josiah; and all the

[1] 2 Kings xxiii. 29; 2 Chron. xxxv. 20, 22.
[2] Zech. xii. 11. [3] Rev. xvi. 16.

singing men and the singing women spake of him in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel; and behold they are written in the lamentations."[1]

Hadadrimmon is identified by St. Jerome with the present hamlet of Rummâneh, at the foot of the hills on the Carmel' side of Esdraelon, about eight miles slightly south-west from Zerin or Jezreel; and Megiddo has commonly been supposed to be represented by the village of Ledjun, which has already been mentioned as the Roman Legio, about three and a half miles north of Rummâneh, at the foot of the hills. Captain Conder, however, finds Megiddo in the ruined site El-Mujedda, at the foot of the hills, in the Beisan plain, about three miles south-west from that old city. The question can hardly be said to be as yet decisively settled.

Still another great battle in Scripture history is associated with these localities—that of Barak over Sisera, which I should have mentioned before that won by Gideon. The oppressor of Israel at the time was Jabin, King of Hazor, a place near the Lake of Merom or Huleh. Hostility to the Hebrews on the part of the chiefs of this district dated from the time of Joshua, for they had fought bitterly against him.[2] Zebulun, Naphtali, and Issachar, being the nearest, suffered most at Jabin's hand, and had to bear the brunt of the war, but they were joined by the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin from the south of the great plain. Barak, with Deborah the prophetess, who was the heroine in the struggle for freedom, had encamped on the broad top of Mount Tabor,[3] which rises 1,500 feet above the plain, to the north of Endor, at the edge of the Galilæan hills. The forces of Sisera, the general of Jabin and his allies, with 900

[1] 2 Chron. xxxv. 25. [2] Josh. xi. 1—12. [3] Judg. iv. 6.

iron chariots, were drawn up in the plain near Megiddo, where the numerous springs from the eastern part of Esdraelon unite to form the Kishon, the course of which, creeping under the shadow of the hills, is marked even in the dry season by a string of pools fringed with reeds and rushes. The soft soil of the whole plain, indeed, is so furrowed by water-courses that a great rain, causing these hollows to overflow, for a time converts the ground everywhere into a quagmire. So long as the plain was dry, no place could have better suited a great chariot-force; but after a storm the wheels were useless, and in case of a defeat, safety lay only in abandoning everything and fleeing on foot. Taking advantage of a fierce rainfall, Barak rushed down from his hill-fortress, and assailed Sisera, now helpless, inflicting utter defeat on his vast, unmanageable army. The storm had filled every hollow with a rushing stream, and had swollen Kishon—"that river of battles"—on which the fugitives were driven back, so that it swept them away. Those who could escape fled northwards by the foot of the hills to Harosheth, now the miserable village of El-Harathiyeh, where the great plain is contracted to a narrow neck through which the Kishon, in a gorge heavily fringed with oleanders, passes into the plain of Acre. Here, they could cross to their own Galilee by low hills, now covered with scrub-oak, and once among the northern mountains they were comparatively safe.

Sisera himself fled in an opposite direction. Reaching the slopes of Tabor, he made for the lava plateau four or five miles behind the lower end of the Lake of Galilee, where stood the tent of Heber the Kenite—not far from the village of Kadish, overlooking the waters. We all know the result, but it is not so generally known that the "leben," or sour goats'-milk, which Jael gave him, is a strong soporific, under the influence of which,

in addition to his exhaustion, the unfortunate man fell an easy prey to his treacherous murderer, who, though a heroine according to Arab notions, can only be regarded as a very questionable saint according to ours. The defeat took place, most probably, at the commencement of the winter rains, and if so, this may give a literal vividness to the words of Deborah that "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera,"[1] for the annual showers of meteors are most frequent about November, and if seen by the terrified fugitives, would seem an awful sign of celestial wrath pursuing them to their destruction.

Jezreel was once the second capital of the northern kingdom, but has now shrunk, as I have said, into a few wretched huts. High over these rise the broken walls of an old tower, possibly on the site of the lofty royal palace-castle, from the top of which warders were at all times on the look-out to announce any approaching danger. The view from it ranges far and wide, in every direction. In the hands of the Canaanites the town was famous for its iron chariots, and proved a difficult place for the Hebrews to take;[2] but, once wrested from them, it fell to the lot of the tribe of Issachar.[3] In later times Ahab built a palace in it,[4] with gardens reaching up the steep slope of the hill, where, doubtless, also lay the vineyard of Naboth, to get which Jezebel committed the hideous crime that ultimately ruined her husband's house.[5] A temple was raised in the place by the queen to Astarte, with a staff of four hundred priests.[6] Everything was on the scale of luxury which we might expect from a king who built a palace coated over with ivory—perhaps in this very Jezreel. In the midst of the enclosed groves, which were

[1] Judg. v. 20.
[2] Josh. xvii. 16.
[3] Josh. xix. 18.
[4] 1 Kings xviii. 45.
[5] 1 Kings xxi. 1.
[6] 1 Kings xvi. 33; 2 Kings x. 11.

watered by the abundant fountains near,[1] lay a fine garden-house, and above this rose the lofty watch-tower.[2] Looking out from this high vantage-ground down the ravine towards the Jordan, the warder once had momentous news to announce to those below. Up the ascent flew some chariots, one leading the way, and in it Jehu, the head of Joram's army, who had conspired against his master and was on his way to destroy Jezebel and her race. "I see a company," cried the look-out, "and the driving is like the driving of Jehu, the son of Nimshi, for he driveth furiously." A few minutes later, Joram, who, though still weak with a recent wound at Ramoth Gilead, had gone out in his chariot to meet his general, lay with the arrow of Jehu through his heart, in the field of Naboth, bought by his father and mother at the heavy price of murder and its curse.[3] Once more behind his horses, Jehu rushed on to Jezreel, passing under the windows far up in the wall of the palace, which must have been built on the line of the town wall. But the evil news of her son's death had already reached the now aged mother, or perhaps she had seen the dismal tragedy from her lofty lattice, and, true to herself to the last, she resolved to die bravely. Getting her maids to paint her eyelids, and tire her head, she looked out composedly at one of the windows, and greeted Jehu as he entered the town gate with the taunting words, "Had Zimri peace—did it go well with him who slew his master?" She would have him remember that, after a seven days' reign, Zimri was crushed by the army, indignant at his usurpation, and died by his own hand in the flames of the king's palace, which he had set on fire as his funeral pile. But such a bitter stab, at such a moment, only exasperated the fierce soldier. Lifting up his eyes to the window, he cried out, "Who is

[1] 2 Kings ix. 27. [2] 2 Kings ix. 17. [3] 2 Kings ix. 24, 25.

on my side?" "And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs. And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down, and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses; and he trod her under foot [of the horses]." Then, as now, numbers of houseless town dogs prowled round the mounds of ashes and refuse in the open space beside the walls, and the taste of her blood soon attracted so many that when men were sent out, after a time, to bury her, they found only her skull, her feet, and the palms of her hands.[1]

There is nothing to be seen in the present village but the tower, which is used for a khan, or resting-place for travellers. The town dogs follow you with hideous uproar as you go through the few streets—if one can use the word for such a collection of hovels. The inhabitants live in perpetual feud with the Bedouins, who, by violence or theft, are continually plundering the poor peasants.

Shunem, of which I have already spoken,[2] lies about four miles off, to the north. On the other side of the great hill Neby Duhy—the "Little Hermon" of the Nazareth Christians, though this name should rather be given to Mount Tabor—lies the ever-sacred spot Nain, where our Lord raised the young man to life as he lay on his bier. Shunem lies on the southern slope of the great hill, Nain on its northern, the lofty peak being, in reality, only a great basalt mass, left standing up bold and steep; the soft limestone rocks through which it once forced itself from the abyss having been washed away in the course of countless ages. Above Nain its sides are a wild chaos of grey and black fragments of basalt, which have been split by time from the mountain, and give it a very desolate appearance. The village now consists only of some wretched mud hovels; but foundations of stone

[1] 2 Kings ix. 30—36.

[2] See *ante*, p. 251.

houses, far outside them, show that it was once larger and more prosperous. No signs of its having been walled remain, so that the "gate of the city" spoken of in the Gospels may have meant the entrance to it, where the houses began: a not uncommon form of speech.[1] On the right of the path from the village are some rock-cut tombs, reached by passing the hollow through which runs the way from Nazareth—that, in all probability, used by our Lord on His journey to Nain. The mourners were carrying the body to one of these tombs when Christ met them, as they advanced down the slope towards the village spring. There are, indeed, tombs in the rocks to the east, but a procession to them would not meet travellers from Nazareth, whence our Lord and the disciples were coming. There are no attractions of trees or gardens around; all is bareness and poverty; yet the remembrance of the Gospel story throws a glory over the spot. You are on the very ground once trodden by the Blessed One! Tabor rises to the north about two miles off, a rich, partly-tilled valley intervening, with a great slope beyond, rough with scrub-oak, locust, arbutus, lentisk, and terebinth trees: a fair sight to see.

[1] Luke vii. 11 ff.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

NAZARETH.

THE ride to Nazareth from Jezreel is a tempting one for a canter—smooth soft earth inviting you to let your beast have his way when he wishes to hurry. It would be impossible to imagine a richer tract of land, but much of it lies idle, and whole fields of thistles are to be seen. Only one small hamlet lay on our track over the broad plain, which seemed to widen as we advanced, the clear air leading strangers to under-estimate the distance. But the hamlet is a historical one, for round it, in 1799, a great battle was fought by Kleber and Napoleon, in which 2,100 Frenchmen routed 25,000 Turks. We were, indeed, passing over the battle-ground of Palestine, where the war-cry of Midianites, Philistines, Egyptians, Jews, Romans, Crusaders, Saracens, French, and Turks had filled the air, again and again, through more than three thousand years. At last the foot of the hills was reached, and the horses began to climb the steep ascent of 1,000 feet that brings one to the plateau in a fold of which, three miles back among its own hills, lies Nazareth. The great cliff on the left, at the side of a narrow pass, has been shown, since the Middle Ages, as that over which His townsmen proposed to cast our Lord, but the scene of the incident could not have been here.

Sheets of smooth rock; fields of huge boulders, between which, at times, there was scarcely room to pass; acres of

loose stones of all sizes, no path or track visible—parts so steep that to hold on to the horse's mane was a help,—everything unspeakably rough and difficult,—such was the way up the face of the rocks to get to the table-land on which Nazareth stands. After a time spots of green appeared on the wide, unearthly desolation, and some lean cattle were to be seen picking up poor mouthfuls among the stones. Further on was a larger, but still very small, spot of green. Goats and sheep alone could find sustenance in such a weird place. After an hour's ride, during which we passed both camels and donkeys toiling up the face of the hill with heavy loads, we came to a spring at the wayside, now running, but dry in summer. At last, all at once, a small valley opened below, set round with hills, and a pleasant little town appeared to the west. Its straggling houses, of white, soft limestone, and mostly new, rose row over row up the steep slope. A fine large building, with slender cypresses growing around it, stood nearest to us; a minaret looked down a little to the rear. Fig-trees, single and in clumps, were growing here and there in the valley, which was covered with crops of grain, lentils, and beans. Above the town the hills were steep and high, with thin pasture, sheets of rock, fig-trees, and now and then an enclosed spot. The small domed tomb-shrine of a Mahommedan saint crowned the upper end of the western slope.

Such was Nazareth, the home of our Lord. I had a kind invitation from Dr. Vartan, medical missionary of the Scottish Society, but could not find his house till I had first discovered that of the English missionary, by nationality a German, by whom a man was kindly sent to guide us to our hospitable quarters. The streets are not more than from six to ten feet broad, causewayed, but still rough, with a gutter in the centre, not always clean; but many

of the houses are new, and this gave to the whole place an air of brightness hardly seen outside of Bethlehem. Dr. Vartan's house stands on the top of the hill, and is reached by a path cut zigzag up the steep white limestone, hard enough for my tired horse, but harder still for a tired man. Once on the plateau above, however, I found a wide stretch of level rock, on which an excellent stone house had been built, and part of a hospital. This, however, the Turks, who are jealous of everything English in Palestine, had stopped. Need I say that the view from such a height was intensely interesting? To the south lay Jezreel, and east of it the mountains of Gilboa, the villages of Nain and Endor, the hills of Gilead, and the top of Mount Ebal; to the north, the snowy top of Hermon, the city of Safed, the village of Sepphoris, and the plain of Buttauf, while from a neighbouring hill, Carmel, the Bay of Acre, and the town of Haifa were in sight.

Numerous hills, not grassy like those of England, but bare, white, and rocky, though here and there faintly green, shut in Nazareth from the outer world; the last heights of Galilee, as they melt away into the plain of Esdraelon. Their long, rounded tops have no wild beauty, and there are no ravines or shady woods to make them romantic or picturesque; indeed, as far as the eye reaches, they are treeless, or very nearly so. The level space behind Dr. Vartan's residence was an epitome of the soil everywhere. It seemed as if there were nothing but solid limestone, on which it would be hopeless to try to grow anything; and yet the chaos of stones from the house and hospital, and from the friable surface generally, only needs water to make it exceedingly fertile. A vineyard had already been planted, as well as fig and olive trees, and it will no doubt justify the labour and expense.

There is a nice little Protestant church at Nazareth, with a congregation drawn from the members of the Greek church, and there is a school for both boys and girls; 152 boys being present when I visited their section. Education, indeed, is the great hope of Missions. "Preaching is of no use," said the people of Cana of Galilee naïvely to the missionary: "give us schools." There are five stations in the villages around, but it would need the enthusiasm and self-denial of a St. Paul to do much real good; so stony and indifferent is the population, and so poor. Yet there are, doubtless, true Christians among them. The Society for the Promotion of Female Education in the East has a very fine building, with eighty-seven orphan girls in training. I went over the establishment, and was greatly pleased with it. Beautifully clean and well-ordered in all respects, it was also a model of economical management: for the maintenance of a girl for a year was reckoned at no more than from seven to ten pounds. The Roman Catholics have two sisterhoods, who teach a school for girls; the Franciscan monks have a school for boys. There is also a Greek Bishop, and with him two or three priests, who have another school for boys. The infants of the town have a school for themselves, where the attendance is from seventy to ninety; the expense is defrayed by a lady in America. Except in the orphanage, the teachers, so far as I saw, were natives.

It was very pleasant to wander about the little town. Masterless dogs prowled about here, as elsewhere, devouring all the offal they could find. In one street several houses were being built, the stone for them being hewn out of the rock on the opposite side of the road, so steep is the hill. But wherever a house is built, the foundations are carefully laid on the rock, even where the position may require

heavy cutting to do so.[1] The town has no walls, and is divided into three districts—the Greek quarter, the Latin or Roman Catholic, and the Moslem; the municipal authorities being a Caimacam, or lieutenant-governor, and a Kadi, or judge. The Franciscans have a great monastery and a fine church, which, however, is only 150 years old; and they claim several holy sites, though these are of no authority. There are, further, a Franciscan convent, and a hospice for pilgrims, in a narrow street leading up by steps between poor huts of stone to a lane where stands the English church, which seats 500 persons, and has a parsonage near it. All these buildings are at the south-west corner of the town.

The water of Nazareth is mainly derived from rain-cisterns, for there is only one spring, and in autumn its supply is precarious. A momentous interest, however, gathers around this single fountain, for it has been in use for immemorial ages, and, no doubt, often saw the Virgin and her Divine Child among those who frequented it morning and evening, as the mothers of the town, many with children at their side, do now. The water comes through spouts in a stone wall, under an arched recess built for shelter, and falls into a trough at which a dozen persons can stand side by side. Thence it runs into a square stone tank at the side, against which gossips at all hours delight to lean. The water that flows over the top of the trough below the spouts makes a small pool immediately beneath them, and there women wash their linen, and even their children; standing in the water, ankle-deep, their baggy trousers—striped pink or green—tucked between their knees, while those coming for water are continually passing and repassing with their jars, empty or full, on their heads. The spring lies under the town, and

[1] Luke vi. 48.

as the Nazareth of ancient times, as shown by old cisterns and tombs, was rather higher up the hill than at present, the fountain must in those days have been still farther away from the houses. Hence it is very probable that the "brow of the hill"[1] may have been one of the cliffs above the town, or one now hidden by the houses. However, in such a hilly place there are precipices in many directions. The open valley to the west, now under crop, gives level space for threshing-floors, for which it is used after harvest.

Looking up at the banks of houses from this point, the whiteness of the new stone reflects a glare of sunlight; but it is said that the stone moulders away so quickly that in fifty years a building appears to be of venerable age, and hence the oldest-looking house may be very modern, in spite of its decay. The fountain, or "Well of Nazareth," stands in a wide open space, with a rough, intermittent line of olive-trees and clumps and hedges of prickly pear at a good distance, leaving ample room for the tents of travellers, the romping of children, and the resting of camels or flocks. The town is only a quarter of a mile long, so that it is a small place, at the best; the population being made up of about 2,000 Mahommedans, 1,000 Roman Catholics, 2,500 Greek Christians, and 100 Protestants—not quite 6,000 in all; but its growth even to this size is only recent, for thirty years ago Nazareth was a poor village. The fact that there is only one spring seems to show that it could at no time have been very large.

Our tents were pitched in the open space at the Virgin's Fountain, though we lived at Dr. Vartan's. Sitting in them occasionally, it was curious to notice the moving life around. Boys playing ball, just as with us;

[1] Luke iv. 29.

a girl in a coloured cotton skirt, with a white cotton jacket over it, carrying a water-jar on her head; a passing string of mangy-looking camels; two or three horses, picketed and feeding; a woman in a black jacket and coloured skirt, with a great canvas sack-load on her head; a long-nosed yellow dog prowling round; a donkey laden with square tins of American paraffin; an old Greek priest with a long beard, and a hat with the rim at the top instead of the bottom; a mounted Arab with his long spear balanced across his lean horse,—all these passed in the space of a few minutes. It was near the time of sunset, and the women, straight in the back as soldiers, were going to the well with their jars on their heads, glorying in skirts and jackets of all colours—pink, scarlet, blue, white, and sage-green, among others. Meanwhile, herds of lean cattle were being driven in from the hills for protection through the night.

The Virgin's Spring bursts out of the ground inside the Greek Church of the Annunciation, which is modern, though a church stood on the same site at least as early as A.D. 700. They say that it was at this spot the angel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin; and if there is nothing to prove the legend, there is, of course, nothing to contradict it. Indeed, the association of such a visit with the outflow of living water from the rock has a certain congruity that is pleasing. The church is half below ground, and the spring, rising freely, is led past the high altar, where it fills a well for the use of pilgrims, and then flows along a conduit to the stone arch and covered tank, to pour out from the wall through the metal spouts. The Christian women, by the way, wear no veils, though they have a gay handkerchief lying over the head, the hair falling down the back from beneath it in long plaits. The Mahommedan women, on the contrary,

are veiled; but all the sex, alike, have drapery so slight, though it covers their whole persons, that the figure is displayed with a clearness very strange to Western ideas, though perfectly modest. Instead of a row of coins over the forehead, such as is worn by their Bethlehem sisters, the women of Nazareth wear strings of them at each side of the face. It was doubtless a piece of money from such a string that had been lost by the woman in the parable,[1] who forthwith lighted a lamp and swept the house, and sought diligently till she found it. With no window, the door giving the only light, the lamp was needed even by day; and where the woman was so poor as to have only ten coins in her ornaments, it is easy to realise how piteous her lament would be at her loss, and how exulting her cry to her neighbours when she had regained her treasure.

The shops of Nazareth are as primitive, one would think, as they could have been in the days of our Lord. Unfortunately, the carpenters have introduced the modern novelty of a work-bench, and no longer sit on the floor beside the board at which they work, as some related crafts still do elsewhere. But their tools are very simple, and it is interesting to notice them doing a great deal at the door-sill, in the light, which with us can only be done at the bench. They sit on the ground to drill holes in wood or to use the adze; but at the best their work seems to us very rude. Blacksmiths, with tiny bellows and furnace and small anvil, find abundant employment in sharpening the simple ploughs and mattocks of the peasantry, and making folding knives for them, the quality of which may be judged from their price, which is only twopence or threepence. Shoemakers also do a good trade, sitting, like all other workmen who can do so, at the door or in

[1] Luke xv. 8.

the street; but their skill is confined to slight short boots of bright-coloured leather, or to slippers without heels, which are all that one sees, as a rule, even on the roughest roads.

The contrast between the women of Nazareth and their peasant sisters is very striking, the superior circumstances of the townsfolk affording them better food and easier lives than the others enjoy. In youth the figure of the women of Palestine is often admirable, but the matrons are very shrivelled—partly, no doubt, from the climate. Young women are careful to conceal the bosom, so far as thin cotton, fitting pretty closely, can do it; but when they have had families they grow indifferent on this point. Perhaps this may arise from the length of time they nurse their children, infants being seldom weaned under two years of age, and a son may have "his own milk" for even double that time, it being a common belief that the longer a child is kept at the breast the stronger he grows. It was on this ground that Hannah stayed from the yearly pilgrimage to Shiloh for we do not know how many years. Samuel, however, was old enough to be left with Eli when she took him to the Tabernacle on his being weaned,[1] and he could scarcely have been considered so had he not been a pretty big child. In allusion to the same prolonged nursing, Isaiah, asking—"Whom doth He teach knowledge? And whom doth He make to understand instruction?" answers—"Those that are weaned from the milk and withdrawn from the breasts."[2] The Evangelist, also, quoting from the Greek version of the Psalms, tells us that God perfects praise out of the mouths of sucklings.[3]

I did not see such dirtiness among the Nazareth children as one meets with so often elsewhere in the Holy

[1] 1 Sam. i. 21—23. [2] Isa. xxviii. 9. [3] Matt. xxi. 16.

Land. Here, however, as everywhere else, fear of "the evil eye" is prevalent. A prayer is uttered before eating, lest that dreaded evil have been turned on the food, which in that case, but for the prayer, would yield no nourishment. Against this mysterious danger, children very generally wear a charm enclosed in a case on the top of their caps; and horses often have something of the same kind on their head-gear. Salt, sprinkled on children shortly after birth, is thought to be a protection against it, and for the same reason it is sprinkled freely at the circumcision of boys, which takes place when they are entering puberty. This superstition in part explains why it is that children are left so filthy; since they are thus, it is fancied, less in danger of attracting attention from those who migh injure them by a baleful look.

CHAPTER XL.

TABOR, EL-MAHRAKAH, CARMEL.

From Nazareth to Tabor is about seven miles. The road we took led us over the hills on the edge of the plain. Long slopes, up and down, characterised the whole ride, much of the way being specially interesting from its unusual wealth in trees and flowers. The carob, or locust-tree, the ilex, the hawthorn, the sumach, the laburnum, and the terebinth grew in numbers, while we came every now and then on orchards of grey olives, green fig-trees, pomegranates with their red buds and opening leaves, and almonds with their pink and white blossom. Underfoot there was at many points a wealth of beauty: flags, anemones of different colours, hyacinths, buttercups and daisies, wild cucumbers, thistles, yellow broom, dandelions, wild mignonette, and cyclamens, in great abundance. Small herds of black oxen, under-sized and lean, were to be seen feeding under the care of a shepherd. All the hollows were fertile, and looked very pleasing, with their orchards and their patches of grain, or other growths. Even the bare slopes of grey rock were fretted with threads of green, springing up in the chinks, though apart from these, some were barren enough. The feet of the horses, mules, and asses, striking the same spots age after age in narrow parts of the way, had worn deep holes in the soft rock. A good proportion of the soil was only fit for rough pasture; and in many places stones lay thick. Half an hour's

ride from Tabor, numerous oaks, not high, but a pleasing contrast to the general treelessness of the country, dotted the slopes as in a park. A small valley, running north and south, separates the giant hill from those around it and we had the village of Deburieh on the right as we passed along the low swell which joins Tabor to the northern mountains. Here the oaks grew especially strong and large, giving the landscape a delightfully English look. The steep height now rose close before us, thick with leafy scrub which left no room for ascent but by zigzagging through it in a rudely-made path, if it can be called a path. The horses found little difficulty in making their way, but it took them nearly an hour to get to the summit. The thick oak-scrub after a time grew thinner, till in some places our track was over bare rock; but the very steep western slope was much more barren than the northern by which we were going up, its surface showing hardly anything but a wilderness of Christ-thorn, scattered over the bare, weather-bleached limestone of which the whole mountain consists. The southern face is nearly naked. Seen from the north, the hill swells up like part of a great globe; from the east it is a broad cone, flattened on the top, and from the west it looks like a wedge rising above the neighbouring hills. It is in reality a long oval, with its greatest width from east to west, its flat top rising nearly 1,500 feet above the plain below.[1]

The top of the hill forms a long and broad plateau, about a quarter of an hour's walk each way, sinking slightly, from nearly all sides, towards the centre. On the north-east side stands a small, recently-built, Greek church, about thirty feet high, with a little bell-tower. Its court was thronged with Russian pilgrims, and some

[1] Plain at foot, 350 feet above the sea; Tabor, 1,843 feet above the sea.

dark and unclean-looking huts alongside of it supply cells for a few monks; the whole being shut in by dry stone walls, which enclose a considerable space. The ground outside is a strange mixture of culture and wildness. An old road, only a few feet broad, with low walls of loose stone at the sides, stretches over a hollow filled with oaks and other trees which are dwarfed to the height of tall shrubs, and leads to a door, iron-railed, built into the arch of the gateway of an old Crusading fortress, now in utter ruin, with wild growths on its top and a wooden cross raised upon some stones: a touching sight. The narrow road or path, with its deep walled sides, has doubtless seen fierce struggles between Christian knight and paynim in the old days, but now it leads to the peaceful loneliness of a Latin monastery. Around, at our feet, were sown patches, and tracts of pasture; farther off, thorns had their own way; elsewhere lay heaps of squared stones from long-fallen ruins, with bushes and weeds of every size and of many kinds thrusting themselves up among them. At the south-east corner of the table land are the remains of a once huge fortress, built by the Crusaders. Stones from fifteen to twenty feet long, carefully squared, still stood in position, while on the east, where the ground outside slopes, a deep fosse had been dug as an additional defence. The ruins are of different ages, and show that from the earliest times this stronghold of nature has been jealously guarded. The foundations of a thick wall of larger stones can be traced all round the top. Walls, arches, and foundations of houses and other buildings are everywhere visible, as though a town had been here as well as a fortress.

I have good reason to speak well of the Franciscans of Mount Tabor. The ride, added to daily hard exercise for weeks before, had tired me exceedingly, so that I was

thankful when we reached the Latin monastery, a large building of one high storey, inviting travellers by its open doors. Only two monks were visible, both young Italians, in the brown cloaks of their Order, with a hood on the back; their heads shaved into the tonsure, a rope girdle round the waist, and sandalled feet. The room we entered was long and lofty, and arched from all sides, to save timber; it was furnished with two long tables, reaching from end to end, some chairs, and, along each of the side walls, a long red cotton-covered couch, or divan. There were some simple Scripture pictures on the walls, and at one end portraits of the last and the present Pope, between doors which opened into sleeping-rooms for strangers, very nice, plain, and clean, with five beds in each. At the other end of the room was a very plain, glass-faced, bookcase-like cupboard.

The young monk, seeing how tired I was, most kindly insisted on getting refreshment, and very soon had part of the table covered with a nice white cloth, on which he set a flask of wine, some coffee, eggs, bread, and a salad of fennel, lettuce, and celery. As he was doing so, the bell of the Greek church began to toll: a sound hateful exceedingly to his soul, as seen in the contemptuous curl of his nose, and heard in some rather narrow-minded expressions. So bitter and unlovely is sectarian feeling everywhere! But he was a good soul. Nothing would content him but that I should lie down on one of the comfortable beds, which I very gladly did, and was soon in a sound sleep, from which my friends aroused me when it was time to leave.

The view from Tabor is very fine. On the south the recess in the great plain, towards Jezreel, lay at my feet, with Jebel Duhy soaring up in the background in naked bareness of rock. Nearer the northern slope was Endor

with its spring, its cave-dwellings, and its tragic memories of Saul's visit, and straight before me Nain, one of the few villages of Galilee of which the name is given in the Gospel. To the east the eye ranged over a sea of hills, undistinguishable by shape from each other, towards the range which encloses the Sea of Galilee, which, however, lay hidden in its deep bed except from one point below the summit, where a gap in the hills gives a glimpse of it. In the north rose the mighty Jermuk mountain, with the hill-town of Safed clearly visible to the west of it. From the same point at which the Lake of Galilee appears we could also see the Mediterranean, but the Dead Sea lies out of sight from any part of Tabor. To the west, the ruined tomb of the Moslem saint, on the hill behind Nazareth, seemed close at hand, while, beneath, Esdraelon stretched away like a great variegated carpet to the hills of Samaria and the range of Carmel.

It was from this plateau that Barak rushed down in the midst of the storm on Sisera's chariots near Megiddo and Taanach, beyond Jezreel.[1] Its isolation, its noble size, and its attractive vegetation, so much richer than that of the hills around, made Tabor famous in the poetry of Israel. "Tabor and Hermon," sings the Psalmist, "shall rejoice in Thy name;"[2] and Jeremiah, announcing the might and glory of the conqueror of Egypt, cries—"As I live, saith the Lord of Hosts, surely as Tabor is among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, so shall he come."[3] It appears to have been inhabited since very early times,[4] and its possession, as has been already remarked, was always held of supreme importance in the wars with which the land was visited. Antiochus the Great,

[1] See *ante*, p. 261.
[2] Ps. lxxxix. 12.
[3] Jer. xlvi. 18.
[4] 1 Chron. vi. 77.

and the Romans after him, only seized it by craft; and Josephus, who was in command in Galilee at the outbreak of the great Jewish war, caused it to be newly fortified, the ruins around us being in large part the remains of what he built. The idea, which is quite a mistake, that Tabor was the Mount of Transfiguration, led to the erection of churches and cloisters on it as early as the reign of Constantine. Nor were the Crusaders behind the earlier Christian zeal. Brave monks of Clugny defended their monastery in the year A.D. 1183 against Saladin; and there were many similar struggles till after the middle of the thirteenth century. At last, however, everything perished, so that a pilgrim to the sacred mountain in A.D. 1283 saw nothing but ruins of palaces, cloisters, and towers, amidst which lions and other wild beasts had their dens; and thus it remained for ages, till in late years the Greeks settled here again, and built their church; the Latins soon following suit.

The slopes north-east of Tabor, as you pass through the light oak-groves near the hill and beyond them, are famous as pastures. Fine trees shade luscious meadows, which are a favourite camping-place for Arabs, whose black tents are seldom wanting in the landscape. Large numbers of camels, stiff and ungainly in their movements, graze around. Herds of cattle, and flocks of sheep and goats, watched by their shepherds, are frequently to be seen, the tents standing in the midst of their feeding-ground. The life of the patriarchs must have been just like that of these wandering tent-dwellers, though it rather shocks the imagination to picture those worthies so simple in dress as the swarthy men of to-day, attired in a shirt and an "abba," with a "kefiyeh" bound round the head with a camels'-hair rope; the women in only a single long blue cotton dress, or rather shirt; and the children

of ten or twelve, of both sexes, wearing nothing but a sheepskin, the wool turned inside.

We returned to Nazareth by a slightly different route, but through very similar landscapes, entering the village by the road leading to the Fountain of the Virgin; delighted to be once more in the town of our Saviour's childhood as well as of His riper life. To the Christian traveller the hills around, especially the highest, crowned with its Moslem tomb, can never be uninteresting. From its top Christ must often have turned His eyes on Carmel and the Great Sea, on the wide plain of Esdraelon, on Tabor, El-Duhy, and Gilboa, on the hills of Samaria, and on the mountains of Gilead, which shut in the horizon to the east. Behind, He must often have looked down into the green sweep of the valley of El-Buttauf, with the peaks and rounded tops of the mountains of Upper Galilee beyond it, Safed shining white from its hill on the north-east, and Jermuk towering aloft near it. Far away to the north, Hermon, snow-crowned, shone before His eyes as it did before ours. Westward, on its hill, stood Sepphoris; and then come the low hills which reach down to the plain of Acre, and hide the town itself. The hills of Nazareth would be almost as lonely then as now, for they are fit only for light pasture at best; and thus at all hours He could find solitary places, at His will, for prayer and meditation.

The streets of Nazareth are often noisy by night with the festivities of marriage, for the local customs are still in most things the same as they were in the time of our Lord. These rejoicings begin now, as then, with sunset, and last several days. Before the marriage the bridegroom goes at evening to the house of a relation, and while he is there a band of maidens lead the bride to his house, and then go to bring the bridegroom home.

If any, however, are too long in coming, he goes to his house without them, and the door is shut. There is a final procession of bride and bridegroom on horseback to the marriage ceremony, with dancing and music as they advance; and the return is similarly gladsome. As in old times, the wife is still bought, the lowest price given being from sixteen to twenty pounds, though in Bible days a Hebrew could get a wife for six pounds. In exceptional cases as much as from sixty to a hundred and fifty pounds is sometimes paid for a bride at the present day. Her father receives the money, if he be a Mahommedan; but among Christians it belongs to the bride as her dowry, which her husband cannot touch, for since a woman cannot inherit, she, with this exception, brings nothing with her but her clothes and ornaments. Rich fathers, however, give their daughters a wedding-portion of some description, though not in money, as Job did when he gave his daughters inheritance among their brethren.[1]

Women in the East are never trusted as in the West, and hence there is no social intercourse between the sexes before marriage, or between a wife and any man but her husband. There is less, however, of this seclusion in villages than in such a place as Nazareth, and less among the Christian than among the Mahommedan women of such a town. Polygamy, being lawful among the "true believers," is practised by them, as far as means permit, and often involves much hardship and cruelty to the weaker sex. The wife who has grown old with her husband, and has lost the beauty she had in youth, instead of being loved the more for the long companionship in which the two have spent life together, is often put away to get her bread as she best can, while her husband takes a young

[1] Job xlii. 15.

woman in her place. Still more frequently, the old wife is made the slave of the new. How much jealousy, envy, rancour, and strife are thus created, especially when there are children of different mothers, can be easily imagined. No wonder that in many cases the wives unite and make common cause against the man. Family life cannot flourish in such a state of things, as we often see in the Bible narratives of royal households. There is, however, one compensation: the affection between mother and children grows intensely strong. In her son, the wife and mother finds the firm, steadfast support which she misses from her husband. By him she is loved with the truest and most reverential affection. It is easy, therefore, to see how terrible a calamity it is to an Oriental wife if her children, and especially her sons, die, or if she be childless. A Western woman can hardly realise how great a sorrow such misfortunes are to her Eastern sister.[1]

Across the plain, nearly west, lies the scene of Elijah's sacrifice. As we started from Nazareth, the village of Makbiyeh lay hidden in a little fruitful valley on the left of the track, with palms in its gardens. Since reaching Jenin, or Engannim, this most graceful tree had reappeared, for though it is not found in the hill-country, where the comparatively low temperature must always have prevented its growing, it abounds near Sidon, Acre, Haifa, and other towns. In this valley, close to Nazareth, it was evidently thriving, and at Jenin it was the special feature of the place. Our Lord could therefore see this specially Oriental tree, day by day, almost in the same landscape in which, afar off, shone the snows of Hermon. So varied is the climate of the Holy Land. It is curious to notice the numerous stems of the palm which strew the shores of the Dead Sea, where

[1] Gen. xxx. 1, 22; 1 Sam. i. 6.

they are brought down the Jordan by floods, or from some of the gorges on the eastern side. In many places numbers of them, and great masses of palm-leaves, encrusted with a coating of lime, deposited by the water from the hills, lie like huge pillars, or stones, till, splitting off the casing, you see the tree or the great fronds as perfect as when they were growing, perhaps many ages ago. Elsewhere, over the country, the palm appears to have been more plentiful long ago than now. "The righteous," says the Psalmist, "shall flourish like the palm-tree,"[1] and even passing strangers feel the aptness of the comparison. For the palm is the tree of the desert, growing luxuriantly not only in the rich soil of Egypt, but in the sandy borders of Gaza. It cannot live without constant moisture, and hence its presence always speaks of water near: an emblem of the grace needed continually to quicken and support the Christian life. It rises high above all the trees around, as the Christian should tower in spiritual stature above his fellows. "Upright as a palm" is a proverb, and should be a lesson. It is always growing while it lives, and brings forth fruit even in old age; and it grows best when its branches are loaded with weights, as the godly man does when he bears the load of this world's afflictions.

Beyond Makbiyeh you presently come upon a lovely spring, Ain Sufsafeh, bubbling out in another valley, with the usual accompaniment of bright and luxuriant vegetation. The descent to the plain was gradual, with a few trees on the slopes, and quite a number of springs bursting from the foot of the hills which here approach within about six miles of the opposite range of Carmel. Once on the open ground, there are no trees, and one can easily understand how the Shunammite's boy, when he had gone

[1] Ps. xcii. 12.

out with his father's reapers to the fields in the hot harvest weather, was struck down by the sun.[1] The great sweep of virtually level ground from Zerin, or Jezreel, to Carmel, was around us, showing the whole distance over which the anxious mother pressed so hurriedly to tell the prophet the sad fate of her boy; and it was not difficult to understand how Elisha, standing on some height of the Carmel range opposite, could distinguish her from a great distance, so as to send Gehazi to ask her errand. The soil everywhere was evidently very rich, but wide stretches were left wild, and there was not a single village from one side to the other.

El-Mahrakah, or "the Place of Burning," has for many years been justly regarded as the scene of Elijah's contest with the priests of Baal. It is the name given to a place near the ruined village of Mansurah. A long, steep climb, by a slippery winding path, brings you over rocks and through thickets to heaps of old dressed stones, close to a ruined cistern of considerable size. The view from the spot is magnificent. Standing on the edge of the hill, you look down a depth of 1,000 feet to the great plain, at the edge of which, close to the hills, flows the Kishon, now comparatively low, but in the rainy season unfordable at this point. The first place at which it can be crossed is farther south, where it is about twenty yards wide; but even there it reaches above the horse's girth. The hewn stones around mark the spot where the altar built by Elijah had stood; but even that was only the reconstruction of a still more ancient altar, which Jezebel, in her fury against Jehovah, had cast down.[2] It was in the vicinity of this sacred spot, I should suppose, that Elisha lived when away in retirement on Carmel;[3] and it was in all probability to a spot above, whence the Great

[1] 2 Kings iv. 18 ff. [2] 1 Kings xviii. 30. [3] 2 Kings iv. 18 ff.

Sea is seen swinging to and fro far beneath to the west, on the other side of the mountains, that the servant of Elijah came up seven times to look for the sign of rain, which appeared at last in the form of the small cloud, known in Palestine, when it is seen driving eastward over the waters towards the land, to be the precursor of a storm.

Climbing to a crag 300 feet higher, we looked down on the altar-stones which lie in a little hollow on the knoll, 1,000 feet, as I have said, above the plain. There, on the banks of the Kishon, is a flat, green knoll, called by the natives Tell-el-Cassis, "the Mound of the Priests." The place of sacrifice, thus overlooking the plain, is shut in on the north by woody cliffs, which, with the slopes around, seem to form a natural amphitheatre: the very spot for the great scene transacted in it. It is at the extreme eastern point of the Carmel hills, about thirteen miles nearly south from the promontory which dips its foot in the sea, and closes the range to the north. The last view of the ocean is to be had from the top of the crag above; and from this point also you have the first view of the great plain, which north of this is narrowed by the close approach of the hills of Galilee. The glades of forest have already been left behind on the north, and the bareness of ordinary hill scenery in Palestine has begun; but there are still some fine trees in the amphitheatre, overhanging an ancient fountain, with a square stone-built reservoir about eight feet deep beside it, traces still remaining of the steps by which the water was reached when low. This spring never dries up, as is shown by the presence of living fresh-water molluscs, which would die if water were at any time to fail them. One can thus understand how, although drought had scorched the land for three years, and the Kishon, after

shrinking to a string of pools, had dried up altogether, there was still water for the sacrifice of Elijah, though he needed so much. The whole of the moisture remaining in the depths of Carmel poured its wealth into this last treasure-house. On one side, in the wide hollow sweep in which this spring lies, were ranged Ahab and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and Astarte; on the other stood the one grand figure of the prophet of Jehovah, in his sheepskin mantle, with his long hair streaming in the wind. Far to the south-east, Jezreel, with the king's palace and Jezebel's temple, were full in sight; and beneath, in ordinary times, were the winding links of the Kishon, slowly gliding on to the narrow pass, overhung with oleanders, through which it enters the plain of Acre on its way to the sea. The contest lasted from morning till noon, and from noon till the time of the evening sacrifice. In vain did the priests of Baal circle round their altar in sacred dances, ever more violent, till at last, like some of the modern dervishes, in their intense earnestness they cut themselves with knives. Elijah could taunt and mock them at his will, for Baal did not answer. Then came the miracle of the burning of the prophet's sacrifice, and the final catastrophe, when the false prophets, at the command of Elijah, were taken down the hill to the knoll over Kishon, and there put to death, their bodies being no doubt thrown into the river-bed, that the flood, soon to come, might bear them away to the sea without burial, the greatest indignity that in ancient times could be offered to the dead.

Remounting the hill to a sacrificial feast—the sign of reconciliation to the land on the part of Jehovah, now that He had been vindicated before all—the king and Elijah ate together from the remains of the offering. Then, we are told, the prophet climbed to "the top of

the mountain," and remained long in prayer, his face bowed to the earth, while his servant, after going seven times to a point from which the sea was visible, at last announced that a cloud was rising in the far west—the first of the kind that had been seen for years. It was already twilight, and the prophet knew the suddenness with which the fierce wind would bear on the storm. Before long the whole heavens were overcast, and the wind gave the sound of abundance of rain. It was imperative that the king should hurry down, and, crossing the Kishon, gain his chariot and drive off for Jezreel, before the rain turned the wide soft plain into a muddy swamp. This done, "the hand of the Lord was on Elijah." Tightening his girdle round him, and running ahead of the galloping horses as they darted off, he kept his place before them with the amazing strength apparently peculiar to Arabs and Indians, till they and he together reached the entrance of Jezreel, sixteen or seventeen miles away.

On the Galilee side of the narrow pass between the plain of Acre and Esdraelon is the village of Sheikh Abreik, standing on a low hill, on the southern edge of a large tract of rolling land, covered with oak-scrub and fringed with trees of larger growth. There are only some miserable hovels in the village, with starved dogs in the lane and on the roofs, and bees murmuring about their clay hives. The Kishon opposite Sheikh Abreik flows in a winding channel thickly overshadowed with oleanders, with a muddy ford in spring and almost a dry bed in summer, but filled after rain with a stream. The caravan-road to Haifa runs along the foot of the hills, and was alive with long strings of camels, moving towards or from the port, one beast stalking with wooden stiffness behind another, each tied to the one before, the leader of the

caravan sitting on an ass in front, contentedly smoking his long wooden pipe as the train behind moved after him at hardly three miles an hour. Going north from Mahrakah, the hills and valleys of Carmel are rich with trees which spread just as they please, with no interruption from human industry. The contrast between this wild "garden of God" and the hills of Palestine elsewhere is very great. Here, vegetation grows in rich luxuriance: everywhere else there is little but thorns, thin pasture, or weathered limestone, bare and forbidding—for even the hills of Samaria are fruitful only on their slopes.

Carmel has enjoyed this pre-eminence among the mountains of the Holy Land from the earliest ages. To the sacred writers it was the emblem of the richest fertility. "The excellency of Carmel"[1] is Isaiah's ideal of the glory of any land. The highest fancy of the inditer of Canticles cannot compliment his beloved more than by assuring her, "Thine head upon thee is like Carmel."[2] That this range should wither is the prophet's darkest image of desolation.[3] In the heat of summer, when the whole landscape, far and near, changes to the yellow of death, Carmel still raises aloft its unfading wealth of green. For its forests to droop and its beauty to fade was the sign to the prophets of the sternest visitation of God.[4] To Micah its pastures were the emblem of the blessedness which God would bestow upon His people. "Feed Thy people," says he, "with Thy rod, the flock of Thine heritage, which dwell solitarily, in the forest in the midst of Carmel."[5] It is no wonder that an altar to Jehovah was early raised on this mountain, or that Elisha made it his chosen retreat,[6] for even the heathen populations regarded

[1] Isa. xxxv. 2.
[2] Cant. vii. 5.
[3] Isa. xxxiii. 9.
[4] Amos. i. 2; Nah. i. 4.
[5] Micah vii. 14.
[6] 1 Kings xviii. 30, 32; 2 Kings ii. 25; iv. 25.

it as sacred. "Between Syria and Judæa," says Tacitus, "is Carmel—the name given to a mountain and to a god: yet there is no image to the god nor any temple, but, as former ages have prescribed, only an altar and worship. Vespasian sacrificed there when revolving in his mind the yet secret hope of empire."[1]

[1] Tac. *Hist.*, ii. 78.

CHAPTER XLI.

HAIFA AND ACRE.

On the way to Haifa charming valleys lie behind the hills which one sees from Esdraelon: some of them darkened by the black tents of Arabs who roam thither to pasture their flocks. Wooded hills, pasture, and tilled land alternate; the last in small quantity. In the rich hollows thousands of people could hide themselves from foes in the plain, who would not suspect the existence of such asylums if they did not penetrate the upper hills. One can understand, therefore, how Jehovah could say, through Amos, of the idolaters of the Ten Tribes, "Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence."[1] Olive-groves occur here and there, and charcoal-burners find abundant material for their craft. The Druse village of Esfia stands on the top of the highest point of the Carmel range, at an altitude of over 1,700 feet from the sea, above the rich vegetation of the valleys, and amidst thorny growths and sheets of rock such as are common in other mountainous districts. The villagers, or their fathers, were implicated in the massacre of Christians in Lebanon nearly fifty years ago, and sought a home on this spot, beyond the reach of the local government. Active and industrious, they have large herds of cattle and asses, and great flocks of sheep and goats. From Esfia northwards,

[1] Amos ix. 3.

towards the sea, the path lay along a high table-land, unbroken by valleys, and covered with rough growths, which after a time give place to great numbers of clumps of firs. It must have been from his having passed through some such place that Isaiah could use the image he employs of the fear into which Ahaz fell on hearing of an alliance against him by the Ten Tribes and Syria—"his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind"[1]—for the rustle of the branches in the soft air is a sound very seldom heard elsewhere in Palestine. Rich slopes appeared again after a time, with flocks of sheep and goats, tended in some cases by girls with sunburnt faces. Wild beasts —hyænas, leopards, wild cats, and other creatures equally fierce—are found in this district, but we saw none. The hills are less fertile towards the west, where the bare stony soil offers support to nothing better than thorns and brambles, though occasionally rich valleys were to be seen. Population, it may be said, there is none, though frequent ruins show that it has been very different in former ages.

The high dome of the Carmelite monastery, on the extreme north-west point of the range, overlooking the sea, is a landmark from great distances. The building is extensive and imposing, standing grandly at a height of more than 500 feet above the waves which break continually underneath. The inside of the cloister is in keeping with its stately exterior: high, airy, wide passages; broad, slowly-ascending stairs; simple but tastefully fitted-up chambers, with perfect cleanliness everywhere, are its characteristics. Besides the church, richly ornamented, there is a library, with much else; and the whole establishment is bright and new, having

[1] Isa. vii. 2.

been put into perfect repair in recent years by the French Government.

The path from this lofty retreat to Haifa descends gently, crossing at the bottom a rich plain, on which a German colony has settled. Haifa itself lies at the south angle of the Bay of Acre, with only a narrow strip between it and the towering wall of Carmel. Here and there a palm rises, and there are many olives and fruit-trees of all kinds, with numerous gardens. Russia, ever mindful of her pilgrims, has built a large hospice for them, and there is also a fine Roman Catholic school. Steamers call at this port, but the harbour has long ago been silted up by sand, and by the mud brought from the mouths of the Nile. Hence, only boats can come near the land, and even from them passengers have to be carried on the backs of the boatmen for more than fifty paces. The streets of the town are filthy and wretched beyond description.

The road to Acre is along the sea-shore, close to the restless waters which run up the smooth beach in ceaseless play. A broad belt of yellow sand separates the blue of the sea from the green of the plain, a sky azure as the ocean stretching over land and water alike. Timbers of wrecks lie on the sand or stick up out of it, showing how dangerous the coast must be in a gale from the west. About two miles from Haifa the Kishon enters the sea—that is, when it can, for a ground current runs strongly against the river-mouth, raising a bar which chokes the stream so quickly that in very dry seasons no visible channel is left, and what water there is filters through the sands. In ordinary times, however, there is a mouth, with a bar across it a little way out in the sea, the water reaching to a horse's knees, but after the rains it is somewhat deeper even at this place; and

for some miles inland the depth increases to from six to fourteen feet.

The plain of Acre was in the territory of Asher, though Acre itself was left to the Phœnicians, for the Jew hated the sea, and his love of commerce is a quality developed late in his history. On such a sweep of rich land Asher indeed "dipped his foot in oil," and could say that "his bread was fat, and that his land yielded royal dainties."[1] As we neared the town, the river Belus, about two feet deep, and broader than the Kishon, flowed into the sea. Here great fisheries for the purple-dye sea-snail were established, and here the creature is still to be found. It is also said that glass was discovered at the Belus by the accidental vitrification of sand under the heat of a fire. Can "the treasures hid in the sands," of which Moses speaks, refer to this?[2] There is only one gate into Acre, close to the sea-shore. Passing through this and traversing a few streets, we reach the bazaar, which is partly covered with an awning of mats, and partly with stone arches, for the sake of coolness. The ramparts are double on the land side, and though in parts shattered, are on the whole in tolerably good condition, the moat outside still showing how strong a place it must once have been. Two hundred and thirty cannon, a number of them captured by Sir Sidney Smith when on their way to Napoleon's army, look out in every direction from the port-holes, but all are old and badly mounted. The port in which fleets lay in the time of the Crusades is now little more than a yard and a half deep where there is most water, so that only small boats can enter. The mosque was sadly knocked about at the last bombardment, in 1840, but has since been repaired, after a fashion. It stands in a great open court, from which rise palms,

[1] Deut. xxxiii..24; Gen. xlix. 20. [2] Deut. xxxiii. 19.

cypresses, and other trees, and is surrounded with vaulted galleries, containing chambers for pilgrims and others, and supported by pillars which were brought from the ruins of Tyre and Cæsarea. Close to the monastery of the Franciscans is a great khan, the wide court of which is surrounded by a row of two-storey houses, with a strong gate, which can be closed upon occasion.

Acre is a miserable town, containing hardly any antiquities; but it is very ancient, for it is spoken of in Judges, where we are told that in Joshua's time the Israelites, never skilled in siege-work, found it too strong for them to take.[1] In the Persian era its fortified haven made it an important basis of operations against Egypt, from a Greek ruler of which, at a later date, it took the name of Ptolemais, mentioned in the chronicles of the Maccabees.[2] But to Christians it is most famous as the place at which St. Paul landed when he went up to Jerusalem for the last time, saluting the brethren then in the town, and staying with them a day.[3] In the time of the Crusaders, Acre flourished, though less when they first held it for eighty years, before it was wrested from them by Saladin in 1189, than after its recapture, as the prize of a two years' siege, by Cœur de Lion in 1191. From that date it remained for exactly a hundred years the centre of Christian power in the Holy Land. The court of the kings, and the seat of the Patriarchate, were here; and by their names the streets indicated that men of many nationalities came to this great mart, for they were called after Pisa, Rome, Genoa, Venice, Florence, and Paris. The story of its splendour is told in the Roman chronicles of the Crusades, but it fell in 1291 before the attack of Sultan Ashrab, and was burned to the ground. Nor was any attempt made to rebuild it till a little over a

[1] Judg. i. 31. [2] 1 Macc. v. 15; x. 1; xii. 45. [3] Acts xxi. 7.

hundred years ago, so that it is essentially a modern town. The population is about 8,000, of whom three-fourths are Mahommedans; and the staple business is the exportation of corn brought from the Haurân, of which from 200 to 300 ship-loads are sent away each year.

The importance of this trade may be realised almost any morning by watching the long trains of camels laden with grain waiting for entrance into the town, their number requiring them to take their turn. The prophet's picture of the prosperity of Judah under the Messiah—"The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come"[1]—must have been suggested by a sight like that now presented at the gates of Acre. The camels are in hundreds, and the caravans seem endless. All these had passed over the road behind Nazareth, and must have been seen, in part, by any villager who chanced to be in that direction; so that contact with the great outer world, enlarging the sympathies and expanding the ideas of the otherwise secluded hill-population, must be constant. So it was in an even greater degree in the time of our Lord, for the life of Palestine was then far more vigorous than it is now; and thus the Son of Mary, although living in the quiet town behind the plain, must have been familiar with scenes which spoke of a greater world than the Jewish, and of other races of men, with equal claim to His gracious pity. The cemetery lies to the east of the town, at the side of the road, like all other Mahommedan burial-grounds in the irregularity of the unshapely, plastered mounds with which it is sown. There is no such thing as a row of graves, or a path through them. The dead are put into any vacant spot, without an idea of order, and the ground is then left open to man and beast. Yet

[1] Isa. lx. 6.

the heart is no less tender in the East than in the West. When we were there, women were sitting at the graves of their loved ones as Mary did in days long past.[1]

As one goes east the landscape rises and falls in gentle swellings, from which glimpses of the town and sea once and again offer themselves. Long trains of camels returning home, after delivering their loads, stalked solemnly on in single file, or two abreast; the empty grain-bags laid across their humps. The cord with which these bags are sewn is more like rope than thread, and indeed is often used as such, so that the needle employed must be something prodigious. Was it in reference to this that the proverb arose about the impossibility of a camel going through the eye of a needle?[2] It is at least certain that the explanation which supposes the needle's eye to be a name given to a small side passage at city gates is not trustworthy, as there are no such small side arches in the East.

[1] John xi. 31.

[2] Mark x. 25.

CHAPTER XLII.

EL-BUTTAUF, CANA, THE MOUNT OF BEATITUDES.

One old Roman road from Acre ran south-east over the hills, past Sepphoris, to the ford of the Jordan, immediately south of the Lake of Galilee. Another led to Nazareth, and then turned south to Esdraelon. Nothing, indeed, is more astonishing than the close network of roads which covered the whole country once, under the Romans, as seen in the great map of Palestine published by the Palestine Survey. Instead of such a well-maintained and admirable system of intercommunication in every direction as obtained in the days of our Lord, only paths over the plains, and rude, frightful tracks up the valleys are to be seen to-day. It is, in fact, impossible to conceive a country in which travelling could be more laborious: a proof of this being the fact I have already mentioned, that distance is measured by the rate at which a horse or other animal *walks* in an hour: three miles, at most, being reckoned an hour's journey. East of Acre there are many well-travelled paths over the plain, which is about seven miles broad, to Damun, the first village at the foot of the hills beyond. To supply water for the numerous caravans, numbers of wells have been dug, some of them very deep. Over many of the shafts rise stone domes, with a square tank in front, and a trough into which water flows. Women were busy at some of these, washing their linen by beating it with a

wooden club: not, I should think, a great help to its durability. The land, like that of Esdraelon, is by no means generally tilled, but in some places, strange to say, even the roads had been ploughed up, so that when the sower goes forth some of his seed must needs fall on the wayside and be trodden under foot.[1]

Damun, though itself a poor place, is nicely situated among groves of olives. About two miles south-east of it lies a village the name of which, Kabul, is interesting from its being thought to recall an incident in the history of Solomon's reign. Hiram of Tyre had most generously provided cedar and cypress wood for the Temple on Mount Moriah and the palace on Zion, as well as a large quantity of gold for ornamenting both, and for all this the shrewd, mean-spirited Jew made over to him the very shabby return of "twenty cities in the land of Galilee,"[2] which, it is to be presumed, were peopled mostly by the heathen Canaanites, and were of very little value to Solomon. They were not in this district, but seem to have lain in the northern part of the territory of Naphtali, on the boundaries of Tyre, and owed the name Kabul, given by Hiram to them as a whole, to their worthlessness in his eyes. Indeed, the Second Book of Chronicles seems to show that Hiram gave them back again to their donor,[3] refusing to accept them.

The country to the south of Kabul is very barren on both sides of the valleys into which it is broken up, the hills being mostly a bare confusion of rocks, grown over with scrub and thorns, though here and there offering sparse feeding for sheep or goats. As a whole this upland region is very poor. The first patches of grain that we saw after leaving Kabul were in the neighbourhood of Kankab, four miles to the south-east. This

[1] Matt. xiii. 4; Luke viii. 5. [2] 1 Kings ix. 11. [3] 2 Chron. viii. 2.

hamlet lies at the west end of a narrow valley in which a fine spring has created a little oasis of fertility. Walls of rock and vigorous scrub mark the steep slopes, the luxuriant green rising on the east side to the dignity of trees, while a carpet of grass fringes the course of the water. Two miles over the hills to the east is Tell Jefat, where once stood the fortress of Jotapata, which Josephus, who was a Jewish general as well as a historian, long defended against Vespasian, capitulating at last for want of water. The ruins of a castle still stand on the high, precipitous hill which rises 500 or 600 feet above the valley. It is burrowed with cisterns throughout, and the traces of a wall round the summit are yet visible. Little more than a mile south-east, over rough hills, you reach a ruined site still known by the native Christians as "Cana of Galilee," possibly the spot where the marriage took place recorded by St. John.[1] Here is the wreck of a large village, with the remains of a wall of large stones which once enclosed it; but all is now silent and desolate. A mile further south, the broad plain of El-Buttauf came in sight—a spacious green sea, here sinking into gentle hollows, there rising in soft swells; the ruined dome of the Mahommedan tomb on the hill-top behind Nazareth being visible on the south.

El-Buttauf is dependent for its fertility on the rains which in their season pour down from the hills that surround it on all sides, and turn its eastern end for part of the year into a marsh. If the heavens be unpropitious, the soil becomes hard as a stone, and there is no harvest. Joel describes such a state of things in his day.[2] The harvest perished, the vine withered, the fig wilted, and all the trees of the field with it; the seed shrivelled below

[1] John ii. 1—11. [2] Joel i. 10—17.

the clods, the threshing-floors were empty, the barns were broken down, for the corn had come to nothing. Descending from the hills where the villages are hid in security, the sower literally "goes forth to sow,"[1] sometimes miles from his home, not seldom with his gun slung over his back, to protect himself against Arabs. The yield of a hundred-fold spoken of by our Lord in the parable is never secured from wheat or barley, though some other kinds of grain, such as maize, are said to yield even more. In the best years the yield of wheat or barley is only about thirty-fold. Can it be that the same mode of reckoning crops was in use in our Master's time as prevails now? Perhaps the explanation is to be found in the assumption that a third of the crop will be eaten by the birds, and a second third by mice and insects, so that if thirty-three-fold be secured by the cultivator he tells you that his land has produced a hundred-fold.

The road from Nazareth to Tiberias, which was left by the Romans in good condition ages ago, but for which time has done its worst since, runs to the north-east, round the long bare hills, which here and there are brightened by olives and fig-trees. Seffurieh, the ancient Sepphoris, stands on a hill to the left, and deserves a visit as the capital of Galilee before Herod Antipas transferred that honour to his newly-built city, Tiberias. Several broad caravan-tracks leading to the Jordan have to be crossed on the way. Clusters of figs and olives brighten the bare hill-sides. Asses with great loads of grass were creeping up the slope, occasionally showing only one ear, for a barbarous custom allows a peasant to cut off the ear of any ass he finds trespassing on his grain-patch. Seffurieh is a large and prosperous village, though the latter expression must not be understood in a Western

[1] Matt. xiii. 3.

sense, for most of the houses are very wretched. It stands, on the top of a hill nearly 800 feet above the sea, and several hundred feet above the valleys and plain. The houses, which lie in crescent shape upon the southern slope, are low, and are built of mud and stone, with flat mud roofs; and as there is no spring, water has to be obtained from cisterns and a rain-pool. Fine olive-trees grow around, though the nearest spring is about a mile off, to the south. East of the hill are some rock-cut tombs of an unusual form, being simply shallow graves, cut in the surface, and covered with stone lids. Remains of an aqueduct show that in ancient times the town was supplied with water brought from higher ground, at great expenditure of labour, for the part still remaining has involved cutting trenches in the rocks, and building conduits over hollows. A huge reservoir, like a cavern, had also been quarried out in the rock, to guard against accidental failure of the water-supply; its height varying from eight to twenty feet, and its breadth from eight to fifteen; while it has been traced westwards, through long-accumulated wreckage, for 580 feet. Low mud hovels have been built against what remains of the church of St. Anne, a relic of the Crusaders; and there is a large ruin called a castle, but it appears to be of recent date, though probably the successor of some much more ancient fortress. The view from the roof is interesting. To the north lies the village of Kefr Menda; east of this, if its claim be admitted, "Cana of Galilee." To the south-east is the tomb on the hill behind Nazareth, and just below you are the hovels and houses of Seffurieh itself. In the time of Josephus, Sepphoris was the largest town of Galilee, and after the destruction of Jerusalem, continued to be the head-quarters of the Jewish people till the fourth century,

the Sanhedrim having its seat here. Christian tradition alleges that the Virgin spent her childhood in Sepphoris, but of this there is no proof. The platform on which the citadel once rose is covered with thick grass. In the narrow dirty streets lay some great mill-stones, evidently ancient; and on the roofs of some of the houses were earthenware bee-hives, with thriving colonies. Above the squalid huts rose a few buildings of hewn stones, with windows, and an upper chamber on the roof.

Kefr Kenna, or Cana, lies on high ground,[1] but not on a hill. An ancient sarcophagus close to the village, beside a small square tank which is fed from a spring, serves very well as a trough. A girl in a white skirt and red jacket, bare-headed and bare-footed, with her jar on her head, was at it. A broad lane of prickly pear led to the group of houses which perhaps represents the New Testament Cana. Loose stones were scattered thickly upon the slope around, and indeed everywhere. There may be, possibly, 150 inhabitants, but no one can envy them their huts of mud and stone, with dunghills at every corner. Huge mud ovens, like great beehives, stood at the sides of some of the houses, and on a little shelf on the outside of one hut I noticed an American petroleum tin, which had been used the year before as a flower-pot. It stood beside the one small window, as if someone fond of flowers had put it there, to get a sight, now and then, of something green and beautiful. In one house a worthy Moslem was squatting on the ground among a number of children, all with slates on which verses of the Koran had been written, which they repeated together. It was the village school; perhaps like that at Nazareth eighteen hundred years ago. A small Franciscan church of white stone within a nice railed wall,

[1] 889 feet above the sea.

with a beautiful garden at the side, had over its doorway these startling words, in Latin, "Here Jesus Christ from water made wine." Some large jars are shown inside as actually those used in the miracle, but such mock relics, however believed in by the simple monks, do the faith of other people more harm than good.

The road from this place onwards to Tiberias led north-east over the plain of El-Buttauf, which must have been familiar ground to our Lord. Sepphoris lay nearly west, on its double, flat-topped hill. To the north the landscape stretched out, roughened by low heights, the soil in the level parts rich but very stony, while in some places sheets of rock came to the surface. A great olive-grove, diamond-shaped and nearly a mile in length, lay on the low ridge on the left; along the pathway we saw clumps of yellow broom, clusters of hawthorn-trees, not yet white, and countless flowers among the thin grass. The fig-trees of the Franciscan garden, I should have said, were now all in leaf, for it was the 17th of March. Patches of thistles were to be seen at different points, and in some parts the stones had been cleared from ploughed land and thrown into the road,[1] to the great discomfort of travellers, for they were of all sizes and in great quantity.

The low heights on the left gradually swelled up to hills, one of which is over 1,700 feet above the sea, and basalt showed itself widely, for this whole region was at one time volcanic. Fragments of lava strewed the ground thickly in every direction; the limestone disappearing. Wild camomile and white anemones seemed respectively the most common plant and flower. Some small flat-roofed villages looked down from the round tops of low heights, but the population, as everywhere else, was very sparse; not enough to till more than a small portion of the

[1] Isa. v. 2.

arable soil. Over some hills to the south lay the great Khan Et Tujjar, where a market is held each Sunday; the position affording special facilities, as the route of the caravan trade between Cairo and Damascus passes by it. Two castles were built here in past ages, for the protection of the market-people; the one on the left of the road—a great square of hewn stones, with towers at the four corners—being in tolerably good preservation. The other was much more ruinous. The khans are for the most part wretched places, with no accommodation but the bare walls of a set of chambers built on the second storey, along the four sides; a balcony in front giving access to them. Vermin of various kinds are amazingly abundant. If you wish boiling water you must gather your own thorns, and light a fire in the earth-floored square below: no easy task, if it be rainy weather. Bed and bedding, if you use them, you must bring with you, and lay upon the floor; but this never troubles an Oriental, for his "abba," as I have had occasion to remark elsewhere, is all the bed-clothes he asks, and he is as much at home on the bare ground as a Russian peasant of the far North; he is happy, moreover, in a sublime indifference to vermin.

It is interesting to notice how exactly the Bible form of reckoning time prevails in the East even now. The hours of the day are numbered from the first to the twelfth, just as of old. It is still "the third hour," or "the sixth," or "the ninth;" and the day begins from sunset, as when the Book of Genesis was written.[1] Part of a day is also reckoned in ordinary conversation as a day, so that if anything happened the day before yesterday it would be said to be the third day since it took place: a computation just like that of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, when speaking of the crucifixion of our

[1] Gen. i. 5.

Lord.[1] It was striking also to hear the religious tone of ordinary discourse, even among those who do not go much beyond words. Salutations are most devout in their invocations of blessing, and every turn of a transaction or narrative, whatever its nature, is interlarded with appeals to God. Religion in fact has become widely separated from morality, as it was in antiquity, and as it still is in too many countries besides. The old Assyrians speak as devoutly in their inscriptions as any saint in Scripture; the warriors in Homer do nothing without bringing in their favourite god; and even Jezebel, when she threatened the life of Elijah, mechanically invoked a curse on herself from her gods, should she turn from her purpose.[2] Pious talk is nowhere so prevalent as in the East, the most hardened scoundrel flavouring his speech with it as freely as saints like Abraham or Isaac do in the Old Testament. As to cursing, it is at home among Orientals: they seem to have a natural genius for it. St. Peter only acted as might have been expected from a Jew, and especially a Jewish fisherman, in beginning to curse and swear when asked if he had not been with Christ.[3] Orientals could still, I suppose, justly claim to be the most proficient of cursers. They swear by their head, by their life, by heaven, by everything. More than once a man has stopped as he passed me, to invoke the most varied and ingenious curses on the infidel. The maledictory Psalms are in strict keeping with Oriental usage.

Long, sweeping valleys, with rich and fruitful black earth, succeeded each other as we advanced, but there was even less cultivation than there had been in Esdraelon. Wide, level plains, divided from each other by soft swells of the land, were also frequent. In fact, we were travelling over a fertile table-land, which would wave

[1] Luke xxiv. 21. [2] 1 Kings xix. 2. [3] Matt. xxvi. 74.

with plenty were there men to break it up and sow it. Perhaps its nearness to the Arabs of the regions beyond Jordan helped to keep it idle, for the peasant has little inducement to draw on himself the notice of these born robbers. To-day, as in Gideon's time, fierce bandits stream over from the east—their long spears held athwart their horses—striking terror into the heart of the husbandman, trampling down the springing seed, carrying the grain from the threshing-floors, driving away the cattle, and killing anyone who resists them. The government of the country exists only to raise taxes; it gives no protection.

Passing the village of Lubieh, standing over 900 feet above the sea, amidst a forest of olives and fig-trees, our road lay straight north towards "the Horns of Hattîn," apparently the scene of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. This famous spot is reached by a long gentle slope of pasture-land, on which a great herd of black and brown cattle, small and poor, was feeding. Daisies, white and red anemones, the phlox, the iris, the wild mustard, grey and dry thistles, blue hyacinths, and yellow-flowered clover coloured the open field, which was the counterpart of some unfenced upland common in England. Molehills, or what very much resembled them, abounded, and black swifts darted hither and thither after insects. Limestone cropped out at the bottom of the ascent, but was exchanged for basalt as we got higher up. . .Gradually the slope sank to a level, green with wheat, which, however, was sadly mixed with yellow mustard weed. The top, reached by climbing a short, rough slope, proved to be a great crater-like space with a slightly hollow floor, set in a frame of rough crags, which inside, at the two ends, rose in a wilderness of stone; outside it swelled into high grassy knolls, "the Horns of Hattîn." Thousands could

stand or sit in the huge circle, though it would be a rough gathering-place, for the whole surface is strewn with boulders and fragments of black basalt, as if they had been rained on the earth in a terrific shower. Hattîn is the name of a small village on the ridge below. The "Horns" rise only sixty feet above the ground at their base, but no other heights are visible in this direction from the Lake of Galilee, which lies three or four miles off in its deeply-sunk bed. It is only since the Crusades that this spot has been assigned to the Sermon on the Mount, but the position is so strikingly in keeping with the intimations of the Gospel narrative as to give great probability to the choice. It is, however, possible that the "level place" where the multitude assembled, and to which our Lord came down, was the plain just below the "Horns."[1] Easy of access alike to the peasants in the hills and the fishermen on the shore, no point could have been a better centre to which to draw both classes. All the other heights are only members of a continuous chain; at this point, alone, one can speak of "the mountain" as an eminence detached from others, and standing out from lower ground. The descent to the lake is by a long, easy slope.

It was in this neighbourhood that the Christian kingdom of Jerusalem met its death-blow at the hands of the Saracen Sultan, Saladin, in 1187, in the great battle of Hattîn. The Crusaders, worn almost to exhaustion, but still loyally gathered round their king, were no longer able to withstand the fierce attacks of an enemy inspired by a certainty of winning in the unequal struggle. For two days the wild strife raged over these slopes between Hattîn and Lubieh, three miles south-west, but at last Saladin gained his most splendid victory; bringing to

[1] Luke vi. 17.

the ground at one blow the Christian rule in Palestine, which had been built up by such a vast sacrifice of life and treasure. The wanderer in this wondrously lonely part may, undisturbed, call up in all its living reality the terrible tumult of battle which once raged over these heights and hollows, and he may well sigh that the result should have been what it was. But the Christian kingdom had brought upon itself its destruction. That it perished must be recognised as the judgment of a righteous Providence, for it had become corrupt, and unworthy of its high mission. Yet who can remain unaffected by the memory of so many brave men in such extremity as that of the Christian army here? The Crusaders had held the Holy Land for nearly a century, but they had been weakened by feuds and dissensions of every kind; they had gloried in breaking faith with unbelievers; they had refused the rights of property to any but Christians; they had decayed in discipline, till every petty leader made little wars against his brethren or his neighbours; they had been governed by rulers without ability or principle; they had sunk into gross immorality as a class; they were not united by any common principle of cohesion, but bore themselves rather as independent adventurers; and, finally, they were, to a large extent, physically enervated by the climate and by their own imprudence or vices. In this condition Saladin—the Kurd—burst on them with 50,000 horse and a vast army of infantry, and forced them to hush up their miserable feuds. The battle at Hattîn was fought in July, a time when the sky is cloudless, and the heat overpowering. The streams and fountains were running dry, the cisterns were low, the ground was parched. At first the advantage of position was with the Christians, for they were encamped at the fountain below Sepphoris, where

water could be had; but the king, Guy of Lusignan, unwisely marched towards Tiberias to meet the enemy, before whom that city had already fallen. The Saracens were drawn up at Hattîn, and were assailed by the Crusaders at sunrise; a relic of the true cross raised on a hillock seeming to the assailants a pledge of victory. But their fierce war-cries and desperate bravery were unavailing against the overwhelming numbers of Saladin's force, and at last they had to flee. A few knights cut their way out, and escaped to Acre, but the king, after retreating to the hills with the relic of the cross, was taken prisoner, with many of his followers, who had repeatedly repulsed the attacks of the enemy. Some of the knights were sold into slavery, others were executed, while one who had been by a breach of faith the immediate cause of the war was put to death by Saladin himself. Beirout, Acre, Cæsarea, and Joppa opened their gates to the conqueror as the first results of his victory; Tyre alone, by the heroism of its governor, was saved; Ascalon soon yielded, and finally Jerusalem; the prisoners, everywhere, being reduced to slavery. Thus calamitous was the close of the Christian kingdom of Palestine.

It was afternoon when we were at Hattîn, and the sun, now bending to the west, shone from a sky threatening rain. For the time, however, his splendour rested upon the landscape. Far below, to the east, lay the glittering waters of that lake on whose waves the feet of our Lord had pressed as on firm ground. A soft west wind breathed around us. The slopes near were green with grass or rising barley, chequered with black patches of ploughed land. On the south-west rose the huge cone of Tabor, lovely with boscage. To the north the mountains of Safed towered up in majesty, and beyond them, mingling earth with the upper sky, shone the

majestic snow-crowned summit of Hermon. Across the lake the hills seemed to form a table-land, cut into ravines by the rains of ages, and sinking to the waters, here gently, there in steep precipices, but everywhere barren and treeless. No signs of human habitation were visible; no huts or houses to mirror themselves in the smooth water; no woods or meadows, though the light and shade, in such pure air, created picturesque tints which gave beauty even to the desolation. Silence and loneliness reigned, for Tiberias was out of sight below the slopes, and one was free to give the imagination full play amidst those holy fields

> "Over whose acres walked those blessed feet
> Which, eighteen hundred years ago, were nailed,
> For our advantage, on the bitter cross."

Descending towards the south-east, we soon turned into a rich valley, nearly all ploughed, and came on half a dozen men, shepherds and peasants, in charge of a herd of cattle. They each had on an "abba" of canvas, with a "kefiyeh" over the head. One was carrying a plough on his shoulders, another had a gun, and all had thick staves or clubs: a sign of the insecurity of the neighbourhood. The wind had by this time gone round to the north-west, and the sky grew dark over the lake, now evidently roughened by a rain-storm, perhaps like that which once broke over the boat when our Lord lay asleep.[1] A rainbow presently showed that the rain was passing away, but, unfortunately, the clouds were coming straight towards us, and the road, rough and down-hill, prevented our hurrying. A deep, wide glen opened as we rode on, its whole space pleasantly green, and enlivened with large

[1] Mark iv. 37.

flocks of goats, kids, sheep, and lambs, in one case with a little bare-headed boy, stick in hand, as shepherd. A number of Damascus mules, on their way home without loads, were feeding on the slopes.' The ownership of the flocks was presently shown by the sight of two groups of black tents of Bedouins, for these ill-conditioned ruffians own nearly all the cattle, sheep, or goats one sees, leaving the peasant only what he can keep them from stealing, and what crops he can guard. While still among the hills the rain broke over us, and there was no shelter; but at last, before we reached Tiberias, there was the "clear shining after" it, and the "mown," or at least thirsty grass, washed and brightened, gleamed in the sun.

CHAPTER XLIII.

TIBERIAS.

Our tents had been pitched at the south end of the town, so that we had to ride past the castle at its north edge, alongside the town wall, and then through the wretched apologies for streets. That night a rain-storm had its way from dark till morning, and a fine time it gave us. The tent-cover flapped like a huge bird caught in the toils, or, to vary the figure, flew up and down, out and in, as if it had been possessed; the huge red, yellow, white, and blue flowers of bunting with which it was adorned on the inside, took life, and leaped and tore round all the tent, and up and down the roof, like a weird dance. I thought of the witches going through their wild careerings on the last night of April on brooms and goats, holding revel with their master the devil at the old heathen altars of North Germany, which Walpurgis,[1] the English monk, had by his preaching left cold and dark even on May Day, when the sacred fires used to glow on them more than in all the year besides. All through the night the rain splashed down in sheets, dripping delightfully from the roof. It was no matter where the narrow bed was dragged; before two minutes some big drop was sure to find you out; and, to make matters more pleasant, it was quite dark. Thanks to a trench dug round the tent by the men when the storm began, it was

[1] About A.D. 750.

comparatively dry under-foot, and before morning the wind-spirits were tired of their madcap riot, and slunk off, taking their friend the rain with them.

The day broke clear and delightful, so that one could move about. The shore was strewn with the wreck of the once splendid city of Tiberias, which extended along it for more than half a mile. In its place, the modern town presents a spectacle of ruins, filth, and wretchedness which is peculiar to itself, even in Palestine. The castle at the north end, with its towers, standing on a low height, was greatly injured by the terrible earthquake of 1837, which killed about half the population. A sea-wall, rising out of the water in front of the town, and of course a relic o antiquity, was twisted and rent in many places; the town walls were shaken and split, and most of the houses destroyed, some still remaining in ruins. On a smaller scale, the destruction resembled that which I saw at Scio in the Greek Archipelago, where a fine stone town had been shaken down like a set of card-houses, and several acres were covered with the *débris*, making it difficult to imagine how anyone escaped.

Earthquakes are not infrequent in Palestine, and were as much dreaded in Bible times as now, though only one is mentioned in the Old Testament;[1] that which happened in the reign of Uzziah, so terrifying the people of Jerusalem that they fled to the Mount of Olives. Palestine lies on a cleft of the earth's surface in the neighbourhood of which earthquakes are common. This stretches from the volcanic Taurus Mountains, passes between the two ranges of Lebanon, forms the Jordan chasm and the bed of the Dead Sea, and ends at the Bay of Akabah. Along this line, convulsions of the earth sometimes occur with terrible violence. Josephus speaks of one which deso-

[1] Amos i. 1; Zech. xiv. 4, 5.

lated Judæa in the reign of Herod, about thirty years before Christ, killing 10,000 people and a great many cattle.[1] The darkening of the sky at the crucifixion of our Lord must also be attributed to a disturbance of the earth, in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem.[2] In the year 1181 the whole of the Haurân, which borders the line of the Jordan, was shaken by an earthquake. The convulsion of 1837, however, exceeded all others which are known to us. Not only Tiberias, but Safed was overthrown, while the trembling extended 500 miles north and south, and from 80 to 100 miles east and west. All earthquakes, however, have a central point of greatest violence, from which the oscillations vibrate in every direction, at the rate of about 30 miles a minute, so that the force of the earth-wave is weakened at a distance from the centre; towns like Nazareth and Jerusalem suffering little by a shock which throws down others lying, like Tiberias, nearer the centre.

At Tiberias the sufferers were largely Jews, though not a few others were overwhelmed by it. A Mahommedan told Dr. Robinson that he and four companions were returning down the mountain, west of the city, on the afternoon when the shock took place. All at once the earth opened and closed again, and two of his friends disappeared. He ran home in terror, and found that his wife, mother, and two more of the family were gone. On digging next day where his two neighbours had vanished, he found them dead, in a standing posture. Seventy eight years before, in 1759, the town was laid waste by a similar catastrophe.

The falling in of portions of the earth's crust, and the strain caused by a sudden development of gas and steam, are the causes of these awful catastrophes. Among a

[1] Jos. *Ant.*, xv. 5, 2. [2] Matt. xxvii. 51.

people like the Hebrews it was rightly felt that they were the work of God. "He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth," says the Psalmist.[1] There is also another allusion to earthquakes, in the Eighth Psalm.[2] Everything, indeed, in such a visitation, is fitted to overpower the mind. In 1837 the hot baths of Tiberias rose to such a temperature that ordinary thermometers were useless,[3] and at various places the earth opened in great chasms, swallowing up many unsuspecting travellers, and closing on them in a few seconds, as when of old the ground devoured Korah and his company.[4] In Lebanon earthquakes are so frequent that most of the houses are of only one storey, with a flat roof; and they often show, in their beams and walls, marks of the twisting and shaking of earth-waves. At Baalbek, again, there are huge pillars thrown far out of the perpendicular: an appearance which no force could produce but that of an eddy of earthquake undulations. That these stupendous phenomena should be connected with the manifestations of the Almighty need not surprise us. An earthquake rent Sinai when God passed before Elijah;[5] the firmness of His promises is enforced by being set above that of the mountains and the hills;[6] an earthquake followed the death of our Lord; and this dread terror is named among the awful signs of His final coming to judgment.[7]

The Jews are very numerous in Tiberias, it and Safed being, after Jerusalem and Hebron, the two holiest towns; for the Messiah is one day, they believe, to rise out of the waters of the lake and land at Tiberias, and Safed is to be the seat of His throne! How imperishable is hope!

[1] Ps. civ. 32.
[2] Ps. viii. 8 ff.
[3] Furrer; Schenkel, *Bib. Lex.*, ii. 138.
[4] Num. xvi. 32.
[5] 1 Kings xix. 11.
[6] Isa. liv. 10.
[7] Matt. xxiv. 7; xxvii. 51.

Prayer must be repeated at Tiberias at least twice a week, to keep the world from being destroyed. The worship in the synagogue seems to be in some respects peculiar, since the congregation seek to intensify different parts of the service by mimetic enforcement of its words. Thus, when the Rabbi recites the passage, "Praise the Lord with the sound of a trumpet," they imitate the sound of a trumpet through their closed fists; when a tempest is mentioned, they puff and blow to represent a storm; and when the cries of the righteous in distress are spoken of in the Lesson; they all set up a loud screaming. The Israelites of Tiberias are chiefly from Russian Poland, and do not speak German. Poor, thin, and filthy, they are certainly far from attractive; but the women are neatly dressed, many of them in white, and look much better than the men.

Ancient Tiberias was built by "the Fox," Herod Antipas, between A.D. 20 and 27; that is, it was begun when our Lord was about twenty-four, and finished when He was thirty-one. During His public ministry, therefore, it was in its first glory, with its Grecian colonnades, its Roman gates, its grand palace with gilded roof, wondrous candelabra, and walls painted with what seemed to the Jews idolatrous symbols; its synagogue, one of the finest in Galilee; and its spacious squares, adorned with marble statues. Yet it is not known that our Saviour ever entered the city, notwithstanding all its splendour. St. John is the only Evangelist who mentions it, but he speaks of it only once, though he twice calls the lake "the Sea of Tiberias."[1] "The Fox" was too dangerous an enemy for our Lord to put Himself into his power, but the character of the city in its first years may also account for the silence about it in the Gospels. An old

[1] John vi. 1, 23; xxi. 1.

cemetery had been laid bare in planning the new capital, and this made the place so unclean that no strict Jew would go near it. Indeed, a population was obtained only by giving houses to heathen freedmen and even slaves, to induce them to settle in it.[1] To visit a place thus defiled would have rendered Christ and His disciples ceremonially unclean, which would have cut them off from communication with the Jewish people, and thus prevented them from preaching the Gospel to them.

That there was a cemetery on the site of Tiberias is, however, a proof that another city had preceded it, though so long before that the tombs were mere antiquities. The face of the hill at the north end of the town, moreover, is pierced with many very ancient sepulchres, some of which must have been destroyed when the town walls were originally built. There is, in fact, no reaching the earliest history of Palestine; in the long past, nation follows nation, but the story of the first in the strange succession is always veiled by impenetrable antiquity.

Tiberias is exceedingly hot and unhealthy in summer, because of its low situation, for it lies no less than 682 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. This in itself would make the climate of the place very warm, but matters are made still worse by hills 1,000 feet high, behind the town, impeding the free course of the refreshing westerly winds which prevail throughout Syria during summer. Hence, intermittent fevers and severe forms of ague are very common at that season. Even in winter little rain falls; snow is almost unknown; and the tropical vegetation, seen in nubk-thorns, palm-trees, and other tropical growths, indicates a temperature much like that of the sunken "ghor" of the Jordan, and approaching the sultry oppressiveness of the valley of

[1] Jos. *Ant.*, xviii. 2, 3.

the Dead Sea. The hill behind the city, as well as the knoll to the north of it, is full of ancient tombs, some of them over 100 feet in length; their cemented sides and other indications showing that they had been long used as cave-dwellings, after their service as tombs had ended with the disappearance of the population by whom they had been excavated. But they are no longer inhabited, except by hyænas, foxes, and jackals.

The ancient city lay mainly to the south of the present Tiberias, as is evident from the position of the numerous foundations, traces of walls, heaps of stones, and remains of the old sea-wall. At one spot lie eight pillars of grey granite, originally brought from Syene, in Egypt; at another a single pillar is still erect; and to the west of the town are two blocks of Syenite granite, once part of a great pillar, the material of which came from the cataracts of the Nile. The ruins of the ancient city have been much excavated for building-stone, and also for limestone blocks, to be burnt for mortar. Water used to be brought in an aqueduct more than six miles long from the Wady Fejjas, below the south end of the lake, and the city wall, three miles long, in all, was led zigzag up to the hills at the back, with cisterns at some of the angles.

About a mile south of the present city are the hot baths, famous for many ages. A stone building, with a dilapidated dome, encloses them, but it is hardly pleasant to use water after it has been enjoyed by sufferers from all kinds of ailments. The temperature of the water is very high—about 144° Fahrenheit; and it tastes like very warm sea-water, excessively salt and bitter, with a strong smell, but no taste, of sulphur. There are four springs, which are collected into a covered channel that conducts them to the baths. The present building is only about fifty years old, but it has never been repaired since it was

built by Ibrahim Pasha in place of the old building, which is quite decayed. The reservoir is arched over, and retains the water till it is cool enough for use; as it comes from the ground it is too hot for the hand to bear. As these baths were known in Christ's day by the name "Ammaus," or "Warm Baths," they may have originally been the "Hammath," in the tribe of Naphtali, mentioned in Joshua.[1] A mile from the baths, on the brow of the hill west of the castle, and at the north end of the town, Dr. Tristram discovered a hot-air cave, which he found himself unable to explore, for the current of heated air made it impossible to carry lights, and the walls and floor were so slippery as to render attempts to advance unsafe, although he had a rope lashed round him, held by strong men outside, to draw him back in case of accident. Such a steam bath shows how entirely the whole region around the town is pervaded by subterranean furnaces, ready at any moment to spread disaster over the district.

In the great Jewish war Tiberias bore a conspicuous part, for it had outlived its ceremonial defilement, and was both rich and populous. Josephus, when in command in Galilee, fortified it, and we may judge the size of its synagogue from its having been used by him as a place in which he convened a public assembly of the people.[2] Although so strong that Vespasian did not venture to approach it with fewer than three legions of his best troops, the town surrendered, and was thus saved from ruin; but Kerak, or Tarichæa, a few miles farther south, and also on the lake, was only taken by storming. Even then, many of the inhabitants, having escaped in boats, were only overcome when Vespasian had built a fleet of other boats to pursue them. A great fight on the lake was fatal to the Jews, 6,500 falling in the naval battle and

[1] Josh. xix. 35. Jos. *Ant.*, xviii. 2, 3. [2] Jos. *Vita*, sec. 54.

in the siege of Tarichæa itself. Twelve hundred more, either too young or too old to bear arms or to labour, were put to death in cold blood, in the circus at Tiberias. After Jerusalem had perished, the Rabbis and Jews betook themselves hither in great numbers, till at last it had as many as thirteen synagogues. Here the famous Mishna was completed, about 200 years after Christ, and the Jerusalem Talmud a century later. The city was long the great seat of Jewish learning, and the graves of many famous doctors—that of the great Maimonides among others—are still shown in the Jewish burial-ground west of the city.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE SEA OF GALILEE.

THE Sea of Galilee is shaped like a pear, with a width, at the broadest part, of six and three-quarter miles, and a length of twelve and a quarter miles; that is, it is about the same length as our own Windermere, but considerably broader, though in the clear air of Palestine it looks somewhat smaller. Nothing can exceed the bright clearness of the water, which it is delightful to watch as it runs in small waves over the shingle. Its taste, moreover, is sweet, except near the hot springs and at Tiberias, where it is polluted by the sewage of the town. On the western side there is a strip of green along the shore south from Tiberias, about two and a half miles long, but little more than a quarter of a mile broad at its widest part. Beyond this the hills for three miles, almost to the point where the Jordan leaves the lake, approach to the water's edge. For three miles north of Tiberias they do the same. Then comes the well-known recess of the Plain of Gennesaret, about three miles long, and about a mile broad at its widest part. For about four miles above this, almost to the entrance of the Jordan into the lake, the hills again reach to the water's edge. The largest tract of green in the landscape extends from half a mile west of the river, round the head of the lake, and down nearly six miles of the eastern shore; it is irregular in shape, as the hills advance or fall back, but only at three places is it so much

as a mile and a half in width. A short interval of hill, with no shore, then occurs, almost opposite Tiberias, and from thence to the point where the river leaves the lake there is another green strip, for the most part about a quarter of a mile broad. Thus there is much more level ground on the eastern side than on the western, yet the western side was always, in Bible times, much more thickly peopled by the Hebrews than the other; partly from the fact that "beyond Jordan" was almost a foreign country; partly because the land above the lake on the east was exposed to the Arabs; and in some measure also because it always had a large intermixture of heathen population.

In Christ's days the sails of whole fleets of boats were reflected in the waters. A constant coasting traffic, and a busy intercourse between the opposite shores, employed many, while the fisheries gave occupation to thousands. Tarichæa, now the ruin called Kerak, near the outflow of the Jordan, had so many boats that Josephus at one time collected 230, for some operations against Tiberias, and we have seen how Vespasian needed to build a fleet to pursue those which sailed away from the town when he took it. Capernaum, Tiberias, Bethsaida, and other places must, besides, have had large numbers of boats, for the fish trade, fresh and salt, was a great industry when the population everywhere was dense.

Having asked our dragoman to hire a vessel for a day's sail on the lake, we had an early call from the master of a very good boat, offering to take us up the shores for twenty shillings. As this, however, was a small fortune in these parts, he was glad to take half of it, which amply repaid him, and is, indeed, the regular fare. The vessel was of six or eight tons burthen, sharp at both ends. A mast leaning forward rose to a height of twelve or thirteen

feet, with a rope through a pulley at the top to hold up a huge lateen sail—that is, a sail stretched on a pole jutting upwards at a sharp angle on one side, high above the mast, though the word originally means a Latin or Roman—that is, Italian—sail. The boat was built, I believe, at Beirout, in sections, which were carried to Tiberias on camels, and there put together. All the wood was foreign except the ribs, which were of oak from Tabor. The stern was decked for about five feet, and on this place of honour our mats were spread; the nets being usually stowed away in the hollow below us, though on this occasion they were left ashore. Was it on this stern-deck that Christ lay during the storm? Or did He rest, as we were glad to do after a time, in the bottom of the boat? The smell of fish was overpowering, almost producing nausea. Yet it was in such a boat, perhaps in one not so good, that He sailed many a time on these very waters! The crew were four in number, arrayed in baggy blue cotton breeches, over which one had a long old European paletot, with a hood; the second, a European loose coat of grey-brown cloth; the third, an old light cloth overcoat, got I know not where; while the fourth gloried in a red striped coat, from Damascus, the sleeves braided with stripes and ornaments. Beneath these outer coverings they had shirts or vests, of striped yellow, brown, green and yellow, and red and yellow, and all had "kefiyehs" on their heads—one of black silk, one of dark purple stuff, the third of red, and the fourth of black; only one being of silk, and that old and worn. The men were bare-legged and bare-footed, and were all big fellows, of light-brown complexion. Were the apostles dressed as strangely, to our ideas, with Roman paletots and overcoats, perhaps, instead of Levantine?

The day was charming. To the north, beyond Safed,

Hermon rose above the hills, like a great snowy cloud, whiter than any fuller on earth could whiten his web; flecked and furrowed by shades of light reflected by the snow from a thousand projections or hollows; no high peak, but a great low arch of light. The old sea-walls of Tiberias rose slightly out of the water, with a basalt tower at one point. Women were washing their mats and linen in the lake, among wretchedly poor houses, broken walls, and dunghills; only a few of the dwellings, indeed, were in passable repair. At one place, some women were taking water, for drinking and household uses, from the foot of a great manure and dust heap, which extended in a high mound to the water's edge. The castle at the northern end of the town appears very ruinous, as seen from the water. The outflow of basalt reached to the side of the lake; the banks being covered with fragments, and great masses lying in the lake itself. Gradually, as we rowed on, the ground rose, topped with a narrow outcrop of basalt, the steep slope roughly green with bushes of thorn; then the level sank again to the shore, and thus it kept on, rising and falling, with more stones than grass even on its best parts. I did not see more than three or four boats on the shore, and none at all on the water. A kingfisher on a post, watching for little fish, a gull overhead, and some wild ducks in the lake, farther on, were the only birds I noticed. Boulders lay in great numbers in the water all along the coast, till we came to Gennesaret.

An hour's rowing brought us to Mejdel, the Magdala of the Gospels. The bank rises in front of it in knolls and low heights, then farther back, towards the opening of a valley from the uplands, it becomes higher. The hills were rocky, but here and there tolerably green, while basalt still cropped out at different points. Close to the lake were a few bushes and beds of reeds; and the valley

ran back to the south-west, the gentle upward slope being dotted with bushes. On the northern side of the valley the hills rose high, with spots of their steep sides ploughed, though, behind the lake, basalt in many parts stands out boldly. The place has hardly any population, and the few who do live here could not be poorer or more wretched than they are. A patch of green wheat rose on one spot at the mouth of the valley; and, stretching along the hill-sides, the telegraph poles to Damascus, with a pathway winding on beside them—the road north and south for all travellers.

Magdala stands on the south corner of the Plain of Gennesaret. Two or three fig-trees grow in or near the houses, and there are a few wretched gardens, with palms in them a few feet high. A small brook sends a trickle of water to the lake over a stony bottom, but it is not irreproachably pure, for it has to run through dunghills. The houses, or huts, of which there are not more than a dozen altogether, are built of mud and stone, and are of one storey and flat-roofed, with no light except from the door; a rough pillar of mud and stone in the one room holds up the ceiling of reeds and branches, and two levels in the mud floor mark the respective bounds of man and beast; for fowls, goats, and perhaps an ass, or some other creature, share the premises with the family. Some unspeakably dirty, almost naked, children followed us about. The ground was rank with brambles, wild mustard, coarse grass—which, if drawn smartly through one's fingers, would cut them—and low prickly bushes, with beds of black basalt fragments of all sizes. An old keep, originally built, it is said, as a "fish tower," rose beside a ruinous pool, once full of fish, but now mostly filled with stones, and leaking so that the soil for some distance round was quaggy with water. Five or six springs,

breaking out of the earth some distance up the valley, feed this old reservoir, and then make their way through the stones to the lake. Eight fig-trees and some elder-bushes, fed by the moisture, helped to hide the misery of the spot; and there were here and there a few oleanders, Christ-thorn trees, and other semi-tropical growths. Such is the village of Mary, whom we now call the Magdalene,[1] with a special meaning to the word, though we know nothing of her except that she came from Magdala, was possessed with seven devils—a calamity we cannot now understand—and was a person in such a position that she could minister to our Lord's needs.

The valley behind Magdala is famous in Jewish history. Now known as the Wady Hamam, or "the Valley of Pigeons," from the myriads of these birds which make their homes in the clefts and caves of its steep sides, it was in the generation before Christ the scene of one of the most daring feats of Herod the Great, when governing Galilee for his father. The slope on which we had looked down from Hattîn ends in precipitous cliffs, little suspected till one sees them from below, and it is thus cut off from the lake by a great gorge or chasm, with upright walls more than 1,000 feet high. On the southern edge of this ravine lies Irbid, now in ruins, but once a great Jewish town, as is seen from the remains of a splendid synagogue. In the high walls of rock on the northern side a great number of small caves are to be seen, protected in some cases, for purposes of defence, by walls across their mouths. It is chiefly in these that the pigeons live, but they are also the nesting-place of great numbers of vultures, ravens, and eagles, who may at all times be seen high in the air, wheeling overhead, on the watch for prey or carrion.

In the terribly troubled times of the last Hyrcanus

[1] Luke viii. 2; Mark xv. 41.

these caves were the retreat of great numbers of Jewish zealots, who were furious at the presence of Antipater the Edomite in the council-chamber of the king, and wished to re-establish a pure theocracy. It was in vain to hope for the pacification of the country while these religious enthusiasts had such a natural stronghold, from which they could rally at will to disturb the government. Gathering together such a force as he could, therefore, Herod, then in his prime, marched from Sepphoris, which he had already taken, to the top of the cliffs, where he was met and well-nigh overpowered. But he was not to be daunted. The caves could not be reached from below, the rock stretching beneath them in perpendicular precipices of immense depth. They must, therefore, be attacked from above, and to this end he caused a large number of huge "cages," strongly bound with iron, to be made, and having filled them with soldiers, let them down by chains from the top till they reached the mouths of the nearest caves. The troops were armed, not only with their swords and spears, but with long hooks to pull out such as resisted and throw them down the rocks. By this means, and by landing where there was footing, their success, though gradual, was in the end complete. In many caves enough combustible material was found to fill the whole interior space with suffocating smoke, and this helped the terrible work, till, at last, many threw themselves headlong into the abyss below. One old man flung down his wife and seven children, and lastly himself, and then the survivors submitted.[1] To win such a victory was wonderful, for the caves are in many cases of great extent, and were well fortified, besides being connected by galleries, and provided with water from numerous cisterns. In later times peaceful hermits took up their abode in them.

[1] Jos. *Ant.*, xv. 3, 6; *Bell.*, i. 16, 4.

The Plain of Gennesaret begins at Magdala, and runs to the north, as I have said, for about three miles, with a depth of about a mile at its widest part. Flat near the shore, it is shut in by low, rounded hills, which are at some points half a mile, at others a mile, in the background. Ploughed land stretches here and there up the slopes of valleys, which in some cases show copings of basalt above. The cliffs of Arbela, or Hamam, look from a distance very much like the crags at Arthur's Seat, near Edinburgh: the same perpendicular wall above; the same masses of broken rock making a steep slope below. The plain itself is quite uncultivated and waste, and so is the gentle rise behind, which to the west has a background of high conical hills. So complete is the solitude of the whole region, that Tiberias and the wretched Magdala are the only inhabited places on the whole lake, although in the days of our Lord nine towns and many villages, all populous, were found on its shores or on the hill-sides behind. At the north end is a khan, or resting-place for travellers—Khan Minieh—one of many which are found on the great caravan-track between Damascus and Egypt; Khan Tujjar, a short day's journey south, being the next; while four miles to the north is Khan Yusef. Between Magdala and Khan Minieh lies Gennesaret; a path along the shore leading down to Tiberias, sometimes almost on a level with the water, at others winding along the face or over the tops of the knolls and low hills, but always close to the lake.

No Christian could look upon the landscape around without emotion. The plain stretches away in all its potential loveliness, set in a frame of green hills, the peaks and varying outlines to the south and south-west adding not a little to the charm of the scene. It must have been beautiful indeed when human industry developed

the wealth of nature, and turned the whole surface into a blooming paradise. Its Hebrew name, Gennesaret, was fondly explained by the Rabbis as meaning "a Garden for Princes," but it seems really to be connected with the Old Testament name Chinnereth, or Chinneroth,[1] which was given to the plain possibly because the rushing sound of its brooks resembled the vibrations of a harp; as it may have been given to the lake from the name of some ancient town on the plain, or perhaps from the shores having a harp-like shape. Josephus has bequeathed to us an enthusiastic description of its fertility in the time of our Lord. It was "admirable," he tells us, "both for its natural properties and its beauty." "Such," he adds, "is the richness of the soil, that every kind of plant grows in it, and all kinds are, therefore, cultivated by the husbandman. Walnut-trees, which need coolness, grow in rich luxuriance alongside the palm, which flourishes only in hot places, and near these are figs and olives, which call for a more temperate air. There is, as it were, an ambitious effort of nature to gather to one spot whatever is elsewhere opposed, and the very seasons appear as if they were in a generous rivalry, each claiming the district for its own; for it not only has the strange virtue of producing fruits of opposite climes, but maintains a continual supply of them, the soil yielding them not once in the year, but at the most various times. Thus the royal fruits, the grape and the fig, ripen for ten months of the year continuously, while the other kinds ripen beside them all the year round."[2] In those days universal irrigation aided these wondrous efforts of nature, and four permanent brooks, at times swollen to torrents, still wind over the surface and enter the lake, showing the ample means at hand for turning the whole into a

[1] Deut. iii. 17; Josh. xi. 2; xii. 3; xiii. 27. [2] Jos. *Bell.*, iii. 10, 8.

"watered garden." The fruit of Gennesaret was the glory of the land, and its wheat the finest.

Over this Eden-like landscape our Lord often wandered. Its palm-groves, its fig-trees with intertwining vines, its soft murmuring brooks, its lilies, and countless flowers of other kinds, the deep blue of the lake, the brown tilth of the neighbouring slopes, the waving gold of their harvest ripeness, must often have calmed His soul when He was disturbed by the waywardness of man. To the heights behind He must often have wandered when the stars had come forth, to spend the night in lonely devotion.[1] In the streets and open spaces of towns and villages long since vanished, He must often have had the sick brought to Him in the cool of the evening; that He might heal them.[2] His voice must often have sounded through the clear air from His boat-pulpit on the strand, or in the concourse of men, proclaiming as "one who had authority" the doctrines of His new spiritual kingdom.[3] Perhaps it was at the very spot where I stood that He revealed Himself after His resurrection to Peter and Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples,[4] when they saw someone in the grey of the morning on the beach, as they rowed to the shore after a night spent in fruitless toil. Man and nature were still hushed in the quiet of the dawn when He addressed these disciples as His "children," bidding them cast their net into the lake once more. And now it encloses a shoal, so that "they were not able to draw in" the widely-stretched meshes "for the multitude of fishes," and John at once whispered to Peter, "It is the Lord." One could think of the warm-hearted, impetuous Simon, as he heard such words, girding around him the "abba"

[1] Mark vi. 46.
[2] Mark i. 22.
[3] Mark ii. 16.
[4] John xxi. 2 ff.

which he had laid aside to struggle the better with the net, and casting himself into the lake to wade ashore to Him whom he so much loved; while his companions came more leisurely, rowing and poling, as they dragged the net with them, till they ran their boat up the smooth, shelly strand. With what followed we are all familiar, ending as it did with the ever-memorable, thrice-repeated, "Lovest thou Me?" and the touching answer, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Our boatmen did not row together, nor did they sit, their invariable habit being to stand, with one foot on the seat to give them more power. It was curious to notice that their feet, never cramped by shoes, were much broader at the toes than at the instep; so different is the natural shape of the foot from that which our hard leather coverings produce. Striking out in a straight line to save a deep bend, we now got a good way from the land, keeping towards Tell Hum, which lies on the shore, about two miles and a half south-west of the entrance of the Jordan into the lake. Sometimes rowing, sometimes sailing, the whole landscape on both sides was within view. On the east, the table-land, sinking precipitously to the water, was scooped into terraces and hollows, and seamed with deep gullies and ravines, down which the wind often rushes with terrible force from the uplands above, which stretch away to the Euphrates. Sir Charles Wilson encountered just such a sudden storm—though from the west—as swept down long ago on the boat in which Christ lay asleep, while His disciples were wrestling with the winds and the waves.[1] "The morning," Sir Charles tells us, "was delightful; a gentle easterly breeze, and not a cloud in the sky to give warning of what was coming. Suddenly, about midday, there was

[1] Matt. viii. 24; Mark iv. 37; Luke viii. 23.

a sound of distant thunder, and a small cloud, 'no bigger than a man's hand,' was seen rising over the heights of Lubieh, to the west. In a few moments the cloud appeared to spread, and heavy black masses came rolling down the hills, towards the lake, completely obscuring Tiberias and Hattîn. At this moment the breeze died away, there were a few minutes of perfect calm, during which the sun shone out with intense power, and the surface of the lake was smooth and even as a mirror; Tiberias, Mejdel, and other buildings stood out, in sharp relief, from the gloom behind; but they were soon lost sight of, as the thunder-gust swept past them and, rapidly advancing across the lake, lifted the placid water into a bright sheet of foam. In another moment it reached the ruins of Gamala, on the eastern hills, driving myself and my companion to take refuge in a cistern, where, for nearly an hour, we were confined, listening to the rattling peals of thunder and torrents of rain. The effect of half the lake in perfect rest, whilst the other half was in wild confusion, was extremely grand. It would have fared ill with any light craft caught in mid-lake by the storm, and we could not help thinking of that memorable occasion on which the storm is so graphically described as 'coming down' upon the lake."[1] Just such a tempest, indeed, as I have already noted, I had myself seen when descending from Hattîn to Tiberias; and the night that followed, with its wild carnival of wind and rain, was still worse. But, like the storm seen by Sir Charles Wilson, it soon spent its fury, leaving the morning to rise bright and beautiful.

Behind Gennesaret, the slopes offer constant illustrations of the Parable of the Sower. Some spots one could see where the good soil invites the peasant, no path running through it, no thorns cumbering it, no rock

[1] *Recovery of Jerusalem*, p. 340.

cropping up, no stony wreck covering the ground. Perhaps quite close to it, a footway passes across the patch of tillage, so that at sowing-time seed must fall on it and be trodden under-foot, or picked off by birds; elsewhere, thorns and thistles engross much of the surface, while at a little distance, perhaps a few rods, the ground is fairly bedded with stones, or the occasional gleam of the rock shows that there is only a skin of earth, not enough to nourish the seed. As we sailed along, the steersman whined a doleful Arab song. There is no such gladsome music in Palestine as in Western countries; a nasal singsong, fit for a dirge, is all one ever hears. I had some talk on the way with the dragoman[1]—a Copt—about his wife. She had been bought for him by his mother, was betrothed at twelve, and married at fourteen. He could send her away for spoiling his dinner, if he liked, but would have to pay her a franc a day for her support. But Copts, he added, with a virtuous air, don't send their wives off in this way, and neither husband nor wife can marry again while the other is alive. In Palestine service is still, at times, accepted for a wife, in lieu of money, as in the case mentioned by Burckhardt, that greatest of travellers, who met a young man in the Haurân who had

[1] "Dragoman" means literally "interpreter," but the office includes not only talking the language of the traveller, but also acting as head of his travelling arrangements. In my case this dignitary, in all the glory of a "kefiyeh," was a young man employed by the Tourists' Agency during the season, spending the rest of the year, as he told me, among the Arabs beyond the Jordan as a shepherd, or, perhaps, in a less innocent capacity. He informed me that he had twice been in gaol, in irons: the last time, quite recently, for stabbing a man. He was lazy, insolent, inconceivably ignorant, and, as a whole, worse than useless. Anyone intending to visit Palestine should try to secure the services of Mr. Rolla Floyd, of Joppa, in my opinion by far the best "dragoman" in Palestine. To obtain his aid insures conscientious lessening of expense wherever practicable, with the advantage of having by one's side bright intelligence, minute knowledge of the Bible, and earnest desire to please. Doubtless, however, there are other excellent guides.

served eight years as a shepherd and peasant labourer, for his food and the promise, which was kept, that he should after that time have the daughter of his master, for whom he would otherwise have had to pay from 700 to 800 piastres. This was an almost exact repetition of Laban's bargain with Jacob,[1] but the parallel was made still more close by the young husband complaining bitterly that, though he had now been married three years, his father-in-law continued to require him to do the most servile work, without paying him anything, and thus prevented him from setting up for himself and his family.[2] Jacob's experience is illustrated in another point by the fact that in modern Egypt a father often objects to giving away a younger daughter till her elder sister is married.[3]

The hills at the upper end of Gennesaret are dotted with bushes and trees, so that they look more inviting than those on the south. The path from Khan Minieh to the lake runs up and down over the rocks along the shore, generally at some distance above the water-level. Indeed, at Khan Minieh it is hewn in the rocks, climbing a rough knoll of black basalt from that spot northwards, and winding along the face of the low cliff, perhaps thirty feet above the water, in a track made, ages ago, by excavation and levelling. Here, one may literally say that he is walking in the footsteps of our Lord, for there is no other way along the coast to get to Tell Hum by land. Landing at Tell Hum, I found it a field of black basalt ruins, strewn over a wide space, but in great part hidden, till you come close to them, by dense clumps of thistles and other huge wild growths. A moment's glance shows it to have been a considerable place, for there are great squared stones in every direction, belonging no doubt to public

[1] Gen. xxix. 18. [2] Gen. xxxi. 7, 39—42. Burckhardt, *Syria*, p. 298.
[3] Lane, *Modern Egyptians*, i. 197.

buildings or the houses of rich men, for the ordinary houses of the common people must long ago have entirely perished. Everywhere, as far as the slope of the hill behind, the ground was sown with the wreck of a brilliant past, though kind nature strove hard by its rank herbage to conceal the melancholy sight. But when the hot summer burns up the grass and shrivels the weeds, so that the ground is visible throughout, the most cursory view of the extent of the desolation must be very striking. Close to the water, on a slightly projecting point, are some ruins, perhaps of a castle, possibly of a church: now roughly covered in as a shelter for sheep or goats. Foundations run hither and thither in every direction, the ground between them swollen into mounds by the ruins below. The site, as a whole, slopes gently upwards over a wide space to the hills, the side towards the lake rising into a slight bank. The walls of the ruins near the lake are adorned with pillars, but they rise only from fifteen to twenty feet above the soil. The heights on the west, seen from this point, run in softly-rounded outline towards the upper end of the Lake, and were covered with green. To the south, the lake spread before me almost to its lower extremity. On the east, the table-land rose, from a fringe of verdure along the shore, in high, slanting walls of rock, here and there green, and worn into clefts or gullies in every direction. A little back from the shore lie some ruins which especially attract attention: colossal squared stones, finely carved, of white crystallised limestone brought from a distance —once the frieze, architrave, and cornices of a magnificent synagogue. The Jews could not have built such a sanctuary except at a time when they were numerous and rich, which they ceased to be very soon after our Lord's day, so that I may perhaps have looked on the very

prayer-house in which He often worshipped. It has, indeed, been thought by some that these stones may have belonged to the very synagogue built by the godly centurion from love to Israel.[1]

Tell Hum has been accepted by some of the officers employed in Palestine and others as the site of Capernaum, but the question can hardly be regarded as settled. Yet there is much to be said for this belief. The name, it is alleged, is an abbreviation for Nahum, Capernaum meaning "the Village of Nahum the Prophet"—for Kefr means a village. This may be correct, since, as we have seen, the Jews lived in Tiberias for centuries after the fall of Jerusalem, and the tradition appears to have been derived from them. It is also said that at the time of Constantine, Capernaum had an exclusively Jewish population, with many Jews among them who were counted heretics by their brethren, from their believing in Christ while still following Moses also, like the Jewish Christians of the Epistles. If this spot be Capernaum, the words of Christ, that it "should be cast down into hades," though then, in its own opinion, "exalted into heaven,"[2] are very literally fulfilled. A few oleanders, with pink flowers, on the edge of the lake, wild beans growing here and there, and flowers in odd spots, were the sole relief to the lonely sadness.

Returning to the boat, to which I was carried on the back of one of the boatmen through the water-plants and the shallow edge of the lake, we rowed north-west towards the place where the Jordan enters, and which we found to be a swampy flat of rich green, the delight of black, flat-headed buffaloes, which have horns curiously bent along the sides of the head. On the other side, beyond the marsh, a green valley ran up among the hills: the wide

[1] Luke vii. 5. [2] Matt. xi. 23.

meadow where our Lord fed the thousands who wished to take Him by force and make Him king.[1] At the head of this valley stood Bethsaida Julias, once a humble village, but in Christ's childhood transformed into a fine city by Herod Philip, the one good son in the worthless family of Herod the Great. It was dignified with the name of Julias in honour of the daughter of Augustus, but its ruins consist of only a few fragments of basalt, though these have an imperishable interest from the connection of the town with some of the miracles of our Lord.[2] They lie above the plain and slopes of the Batîhah, where the multitude, while being fed with the bread that perisheth, were told of the true bread that cometh down from heaven. Christ was then on His way to Cæsarea Philippi.

The tomb of the mild and just Philip once stood in Bethsaida Julias, but it has long since disappeared. This was the prince who married Salome, infamous for her share in the murder of John the Baptist. Philip had lived a bachelor till he became an elderly man, and then he fell in love with the daughter of Herodias and his half-brother Philip of Jerusalem—a girl a little over fourteen when she became the wife of the old man. The birthday feast of Herod Antipas, at which she danced with such fatal result, took place shortly before her marriage, and, as her husband died in A.D. 33, only a few years after the Baptist's death, she must have been still quite a girl when left a widow. Philip, in fact, was more than three times as old as his bride. Salome was then, apparently, a favourite name, for it was borne by a sister, a daughter, and a granddaughter of Herod the Great, and it was also given to a sister of Mary, the mother of our Lord.

[1] John vi. 15. [2] Matt. xii. 21; Mark viii. 22–26.

Turning the boat's head, at last, towards Khan Minieh, where our tents awaited us, we ran close alongshore as we came near it. Just before we landed, one of the boatmen, a splendid fellow, taking off his loose cotton trousers and long jacket so that only his shirt remained, stepped into the water at a spot where the low edge was thick with bushes of all kinds, the boat for the time lying still. Taking with him a round net, hung about at its edges with small leaden weights, and wading ashore, he gathered the meshes carefully into one hand, so that the weights hung free beneath, and creeping along the shore under cover of the bushes till he came to a little bend in the water, he then, in a moment, flung out the net with a whirl which spread it like a circle, the lead causing it instantly to sink. Four fishes—like good-sized perch—were his reward. The process was several times renewed, at different points near each other, till he had caught as many as he wished. The net was not drawn in, the fish being lifted from below it while it lay at the bottom of the shallow water. It would be difficult, therefore, to identify it with any of the nets mentioned in the Gospels. There is another kind of net, however, in use on the lake, and this also is cast by one man into the water, although larger than the one used by our boatman. The fisherman, stripping himself quite naked, swims out as far as he thinks fit, drops his net, and then returns with it, holding the cords at the sides. In this way a few fishes are easily caught in waters so well stocked. There is, indeed, no end of wealth in the lake, if proper fisheries were established, for the shoals are so great as frequently to cover an acre or more of the surface, the back fins ruffling the water like heavy raindrops as they move slowly along, close to the surface.

The large net—the "sagēnē" of the New Testament,

and our seine—is not now, so far as I know, in use, but it must, one would think, have been that used for the miraculous draughts in the Gospel. The word understood to mean a casting-net is found in only two places; neither of them connected with these miracles.[1] It is, at any rate, certain that the apostles used different kinds, for while Peter and Andrew are in one verse said to have been busy casting one kind of net into the sea, James and John are described two verses afterwards as mending another kind in their boat;[2] and, including the two cases of miraculous draughts, this second kind is twelve times mentioned.[3] But it is hard to dogmatise on the subject, for Mark describes Peter and Andrew as casting a net of the first kind and leaving nets of the second,[4] while the seine is only spoken of once, when the kingdom of heaven is compared to a net[5]—the one here intended being, no doubt, the largest in use. My boatman, as I have said, kept on his shirt, but as it was tucked up round him, he was really naked. Men such as he commonly work at their craft entirely nude, except for a skull-cap of thick felt. But we need not suppose that Peter did more, when he girt his coat round him,[6] than to put his "abba" over his inner tunic; for one can hardly imagine that, amid a population so dense as that round the lake in those days, men carried on their work in a state of absolute nudity. Perhaps the expression "naked" is used as Virgil uses it in his counsel to the ploughmen to work, as we might say, "in their shirt-sleeves," for this is what he means. Yet Roman games were exhibited in

[1] Matt. iv. 18; Mark i. 16.
[2] Matt. iv. 18, 21.
[3] Matt. iv. 20, 21; Mark i. 18, 19; Luke v. 2, 4, 5, 6; John xxi. 6, 8, 11.
[4] Mark i. 16, 18.
[5] Matt. xiii. 47. The three words are ἀμφίβλησστρον, δίκτυον, and σαγήνη.
[6] John xxi. 7.

Christ's day, even at Jerusalem, in which the men who took part in them before great bodies of spectators of both sexes were entirely naked; so that we must not measure ancient ideas by our own. On the Egyptian monuments, moreover, fishermen using nets are naked.

The net once drawn to shore, its contents are examined to see what fish are too small and what are inedible—all such being thrown back into the sea, as was the custom in our Lord's day.[1] Then, however, the "bad" were chiefly those reckoned unclean, which meant all that had not fins and scales:[2] a distinction that may perhaps be accounted for by the fact that in Egypt, from which the Hebrews came, fish without scales are generally unwholesome.[3] By the way, did the Jews eat beetles? Egyptian women do,[4] and Leviticus says that the Hebrews were free to eat the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind.[5] But, I apprehend, the translation should rather be—"the flying locust, the kind known as 'the destroyer,' the leaping locust, and the young locust." One other Egyptian custom strikes me as throwing light on Mosaic ordinances. Women are "unclean" in Egypt for forty days after childbirth: Moses ordered that they should be reckoned unclean for forty days after the birth of a son, and eighty days after that of a daughter.[6]

[1] Matt. xiii. 48.
[2] Lev. xi. 9—12.
[3] Lane, *Modern Egyptians*, i. 197.
[4] *Ibid.*, i. 238.
[5] Lev. xi. 22.
[6] Lev. xii. 2, 4, 5.

CHAPTER XLV.

KHAN MINIEH, KHERSA, CHORAZIN.

KHAN MIŃIEH is in a beautiful green plain, with a low crag on its northern side, and a copious spring spreading beneath it into a pool and marsh, in which there still grows the papyrus—a word which is the ancestor of our "paper." This wonderful reed rises slim and tall, with a reddish-brown tuft at the top, and at this spot is very plentiful. So also are the gigantic reeds which shake in every breath of wind,[1] as they well may, for they are ten or twelve feet high. We had hardly settled in our tents, before a caravan of Greek Church pilgrims from Damascus, about 500 in number, made its appearance, and took up its quarters on the green space beside us. Tents rose as if by magic, and were speedily filled with men, women, and children; for if a child is taken to the holy places, and especially to the Jordan, it is saved from the necessity of making the journey at a later period. Mules, horses, and asses were presently picketed, far and near; fires of thistles and thorns were kindled, and meals cooked and eaten. Groups gathered around the pleasant blaze as the night fell; singing, in one place to the clapping of hands, in another to taps on a copper ewer made to serve as a drum, in a third to the thrum of an asthmatic guitar with little more sound than a child's penny organ. But clapping hands in chorus to the singing was

[1] Matt. xi. 7; Luke vii. 24.

most common. The women sat among the men; and very merry they all were. Religious pilgrimages may have a strain of seriousness, but it is well-nigh lost to the common eye in riotous jollity, far from divine. It was a wild scene; not helpful to morals, I fear. Shouting, and firing of guns and pistols, went on incessantly till late at night, and then many persons lay down on the open ground, since the tents could not hold all; not a few sleeping among the horses, asses, and mules. It seemed, however, as if the noise would never cease. Long after I had hoped the madness was over volley, after volley was discharged, each followed by wild cries from all around; and even at the last, when I was fairly tired out, loud recitals of stories were going on round some of the fires; one leading, and the rest repeating the same chorus over and over after every second line. Was this scene—of course without the firing, for which the blowing of horns might be substituted—like that presented by the Passover caravans in Bible times?

Khan Minieh has been thought by some to be the true site of the city of Capernaum—Christ's own city. It is certain that extensive ruins are hidden below its green sward, for the peasants find it profitable to dig to the depth of from eight to twelve feet into the mounds that dot the locality, for stones, some to build with, others to burn into lime. In these excavations rounded stones are first met, but below them, four feet or more from the surface, foundations of walls occur, built in some cases of finely-squared blocks of limestone. Pottery and remains of other kinds are also found. The arguments in favour of Capernaum having been here, rather than at Tell Hum, are various. Both it and Bethsaida are believed to have been in or near to the Plain of Gennesaret, because when our Lord, in crossing the lake after the miraculous feeding, would have come to Bethsaida and the wind prevented Him, He was

forced to come ashore in "the land of Gennesaret;" the Gospel adding that the Jews who followed Him came next day and found Him in Capernaum.[1] A fountain of Capernaum, spoken of by Josephus as in the tract of Gennesaret, is thought to have been the Ain-el-Tin at Khan Minieh, especially since he says that it was thought to be connected with the Egyptian Nile, from having in it fish like the coracinus of that river. In accordance with this, Dr. Tristram tells us that he found in the Round Fountain of Ain Mudawarah, about a mile north of Magdala and half a mile back from the lake, at the foot of the hills, a fish "like that of the lake near Alexandria." "A cat-fish," he adds, "identical with the cat-fish of the ponds of Lower Egypt, does abound to a remarkable degree in the Round Spring, to this day." In fact, he obtained specimens of it a yard long.[2] Josephus, moreover, speaks of a village of Capernaum as in this vicinity. Tell Hum, it is argued, cannot be said to be in "the land of Gennesaret," for it is three miles off to the north-east, and there is no fountain of any kind there; the ancient town which once stood on the spot having obtained its supply of water entirely from the lake. There was, besides, a custom-house at Capernaum,[3] and a Roman garrison,[4] which would be quite natural at Khan Minieh, where a Roman road comes down to the lake from the north, but which could not be found at Tell Hum, where there was no Roman road, and where the frontier was three miles off.

There is no reason to doubt that the true site, whether here or at Tell Hum, was still known in the fourth century, when a church was built upon it; but its position

[1] John vi. 21, 22, 59; Matt. xiv. 34; Mark vi. 53.
[2] *Land of Israel*, p. 442.
[3] Matt. ix. 9.
[4] Matt. viii. 5.

has been doubtful now for many centuries, so complete has been the ruin of this once flourishing region. The scene of our Lord's home for the last three years of His life, where so many of His mighty works were performed, and so great a proportion of His wondrous words spoken, would surely, it might have been thought, be kept permanently in memory by successive generations of His disciples. Yet it has utterly passed away, leaving it to conjecture and argument to fix its situation. The Jews have clung to Tiberias, but Christians have allowed Capernaum to be utterly forgotten, except for the pages of the Gospel. In this virtual disappearance of a place so immeasurably dear to all Christians, may we not read the lesson that the seen and the material are of little moment in a spiritual religion, and that the holy places of our faith have had a veil drawn over them designedly by Providence, to turn our thoughts from superstitious veneration of the accidents of faith to the great ideal in Christ Himself?

It would be interesting to go through the Gospels and note the strict correctness of their allusions to the scenery, topography, and customs of the people round the lake in old times. We still *go down* from Cana to Capernaum;[1] Safed is "a city set on an hill," and might have been pointed to from Hattîn when the words were uttered,[2] though, indeed, almost all the towns and villages of Palestine are on hills. The allusions to the fate of the seed as it falls from the hand of the sower; to the merchant seeking goodly pearls; to the fisher's craft on the lake; and all else in the sacred narrative, are always absolutely true to nature and fact. Even apparent contradictions to what may be supposed to be Oriental manners, such as the mention of women as present in public, notwithstanding the usual Eastern seclusion of the sex,[3] are true to life, for

[1] John iv. 47. [2] Matt. v. 14. [3] Matt. xiv. 21; xv. 38.

at this very day, the great excitements of life—a funeral, wedding, feast, or market—attract women and children in such numbers that they often form the majority of the spectators or participants.

In summer, on account of the heat and moisture, the shores of the Lake of Galilee are very much troubled with insects and similar plagues. The centipede, crawling from some heap of stones, bites, say the Arabs, with a result forty times as painful as the spider, for they maintain that it pierces the flesh not only with its jaws, but with each of its many feet. The scorpion may sting you as you lean against a wall, or put your hand carelessly on a stone used for temporary rest; and very disagreeable is the effect. This crab-like member of the *articulata* is very common in Palestine, where more than eight species are known. One place, indeed, mentioned three times in the Old Testament, gets its name from this pest, viz., Maaleh Akrabbim—"the Scorpion Slopes"[1]—which Kiepert places a little to the north-east of Shiloh. The most dangerous variety is the black rock-scorpion, as thick as a finger, and five or six inches long; others are yellow, brown, white, red, or striped and banded. During cold weather they lie dormant, but at the return of heat they crawl forth from beneath the stones under which they have lain hidden, or out of the crevices of walls, and chinks of other kinds, and make their way not only to the paths where men pass, but into houses, where they get below sleeping-mats, carpets, or clothes, or creep into shoes or slippers. They are carnivorous by nature, living on beetles, insects, and the like; but they sting whatever frightens or irritates them, though their poison, while very painful in its effects, may be neutralised, except in rare cases, by the application of ammonia and sweet oil, or may be withdrawn

[1] Num. xxxiv. 4; Josh. xv. 3: Judg. i. 36.

by suction. But occasionally it causes death. Scorpions are four times mentioned in the Old Testament, twice metaphorically and twice literally, their number in the deserts of Sinai, which is still remarkable, being noticed in one text, and their habit of frequenting desolate and ruinous parts in another.[1] Ezekiel, bitterly persecuted, like all other earnest reformers of every age, was to be thrust out to live among scorpions; the guilty whom he rebuked treating him as unfit to live with men. Rehoboam was foolish enough to repeat, as from himself, the counsel of his flatterers, threatening to chastise the Ten Tribes with "scorpions"[2]—probably a scourge with sharp metal tips, the blow of which was cruel as a scorpion's sting. In the New Testament, the apostles are promised power to tread with impunity on these hateful creatures;[3] and our Lord inquires, as an encouragement to prayer, whether, if a son ask an egg, a father will give him a scorpion;[4] that is, evil instead of good.

But the mosquitoes are a greater trouble than the scorpions, for their number is legion, and on the shores of the lake they are of an unusual size. At Tiberias they swarm in myriads, so that the reproach of Christ, that the Pharisees would strain out a gnat, while they swallowed a camel, must have come vividly home to His hearers.[5] Fleas, however, are the supreme worry of this district. How they all get a living I cannot conjecture, unless it be that the thoroughness of their attacks, when they find a victim, sustains them till another comes in their way. Bedouins are often forced to change their camps on account of the number of these insects, and at Tiberias and elsewhere I have had cause to regret that my

[1] Deut. viii. 15; Ezek. ii. 6.
[2] 1 Kings xii. 11, 14; 1 Chron. x. 11, 14.
[3] Luke x. 19.
[4] Luke xi. 12.
[5] Matt. xxiii. 24.

own tent should have been pitched on ground that had been used as an encampment by native travellers or tent people, perhaps long before. Nor is this only a modern trouble, for fleas appear to have been as pestilently common in Bible times as to-day, since poor David points out that his persecution by Saul is no less beneath the king than would be the chasing of a single flea.[1]

The Jordan leaves the lake through a green plain, which rises about twenty feet above it, but slopes very soon towards the south. The water is about 100 feet across, and four feet deep, with a swift current; and one has to get over as best he can, though the ruins of a bridge speak of greater facilities in old times. A village of about 200 wretched houses lies on the east of the river, at the edge of the lake, but the Moslems who inhabit it have a very bad name. Pity it is that so beautiful a situation should be so miserably occupied! Kerak, the ancient Tarichæa, stands on the west side of the lake a short distance from the exit of the Jordan; and on the east, half-way up the coast, is the village of Khersa, which is thought by many to have been the scene of our Lord's cure of the demoniacs. Gadara is mentioned as the place by St. Mark and St. Luke in the text of the Authorised Version, while St. Matthew gives the name as Gergesa. In the Revised Version, however, we have Gerasa in both Mark and Luke, while Gadara is, curiously, inserted in Matthew's account.

This last place—a Roman town, now Umm Keis—lay about six miles south-west from the lake, and was famed for its baths. There are still numerous tomb-caverns to the east of the ruins, with a great many richly-sculptured basalt sarcophagi scattered over the slopes of the hill. The stone doors of the rock-tombs are

[1] 1 Sam. xxiv. 14; xxvi. 20.

in many cases preserved, the sarcophagi of the chambers within serving the lazy peasants as bins for their grain and stores. West of the tombs are the ruins of two theatres, in wonderful preservation, even the stages being complete, though covered with rubbish. Heaps of hewn stone and fragments of pillars lie scattered over the level plateau of about a mile in width; and in many places the ruts of wheels are still to be seen in the basalt pavement. That our Lord should have walked a few miles from the shore of the lake is not surprising; and besides its being mentioned in the Gospels, Gadara has in its favour, as the scene of His miracle, the fact that it was one of the places belonging to the league of the ten cities, called Decapolis, through which the demoniacs went proclaiming His greatness, after they had been cured. Yet this does not necessarily imply that the town where they had lived was a member of this alliance; it may mean only that it lay near the border of the district thus named.

Gerasa, the modern Jerash, once a splendid Roman city, and still famous for its noble ruins, lies forty miles south-east of the lake, so that it is impossible to regard it as the place in question; and thus we are shut up to a choice between Gadara and Khersa, or Gersa, a name which might easily be contracted from Gergesa. This is a small place, but its ruins are enclosed by the remains of a wall, which show that it was once much larger; and we have the assurance of Origen that a city, Gergesa, stood on the east shore of the lake, opposite Tiberias.[1] The accounts in the Gospels certainly imply that the city was close to the water;[2] and at Khersa, moreover, there is the steepest slope to be found on the banks of the lake, which is so

[1] Orig. *Opp.*, iv. 140.

[2] Matt. viii. 28; ix. 1; Mark v. 1, 21; Luke viii. 26, 40.

close to the foot of it that a herd of swine, rushing madly down, would not be able to stop, but must be precipitated into the depths. .

We broke up from Khan Minieh early next morning, to ride up the shore towards the entrance of the Jordan. The pilgrims were all gone before I rose, at six, but a band of Arabs, with horses, had come in their place. I was loth to leave a spot so beautiful; green on every side, with abundant waters flowing softly through the reeds, or shining in a lovely pool. A finely-dressed Damascene, by-the-bye, riding his horse into this pool, presently found himself in trouble, for the beast, alarmed I suppose to see so much water, reared and threw its rider. He kept hold of the bridle, however, and picking himself up, walked out to dry land, his bravery sadly smirched for the time.

Passing round the low cliff, once I should think surmounted by a castle, we followed the old track, a very narrow one, cut in the face of the rocks—the very path, as I have said, which our Saviour must often have trod. Our journey lay by the side of the lake, almost on a level with the water, for the crag was very soon passed, and the Plain of Gennesaret left behind. Less than a mile from it lies the supposed site of Bethsaida—now known as Ain Tâbghah—with a strong stream rushing past an old stone mill still at work, amidst a luxuriance of green spread over a small plain, a fringe of fine gravel bordering the lake. Before long, however, fertility was once more lost, for the slopes on our left, as we rode on, were thick with pieces of basalt of all sizes, though lovely oleanders fringed them, and ploughs were going on the next slope above, amidst thousands of stones, very little soil being visible. What could be seen, however, left no question of its fruitfulness.

We again passed Tell Hum, with its long-silent ruins, hidden among thistle-beds and rank herbage—once the scene of so much busy life; its streets perhaps daily trodden by our Saviour and His apostles, and perhaps often honoured by His voice speaking as never man spake; its open spaces filled with the nameless sick, pressing, if only to touch the hem of His "abba," which they had found to be life-giving; the same bright heaven with its infinite azure shining over all, and the same blue lake whispering among the pebbles on the beach. I took the opportunity for a renewed survey of the ruins. The synagogue, of white limestone, the one pale building in a town of black stone, is nearly level with the surface of the ground, and most of its pillars have been carried off to be burnt for lime. It must have been about seventy-five feet long and fifty-seven feet broad; the roof having been supported by rows of pillars, the bases of which in many cases are still in position, while some Corinthian capitals lie in the rubbish, along with blocks of stone which had rested on them and supported the wooden rafters. Synagogues seem to have nearly always had some religious emblem over their main entrance—a seven-branched candlestick, or a Paschal lamb:[1] the device over this one, still seen on a large stone, was a pot of manna, which is very striking if this were the building frequented by Christ. Perhaps it was in sight of it that He cried, "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead."[2] The ruins of the ancient town cover a space about half a mile in length and half as broad. On the north side are two remarkable tombs; one, of limestone blocks, built underground in an excavation made in the hard basalt; the

[1] There is one, however, over which a hare—an unclean creature—is represented.

[2] John vi. 48, 49.

other, a great four-cornered structure, above ground, made to hold a great many bodies, and apparently once white-washed: one of those tombs to which our Lord compared the Pharisees of His day when He proclaimed them "whited sepulchres."[1] There are no traces of a harbour, so that the fishing-boats must either have been drawn up on shore when not in use, or kept in the little bend at Tâbghah, where the mill now is. This place, a mile and a half from Tell Hum, is believed by Sir Charles Wilson to have been the fountain of Capernaum, a distinction which Canon Tristram confers upon the "Round Fountain" away at the south end of Gennesaret. There are five fountains at Tâbghah; one of them quite a small river. Its waters appear to have been raised in ancient times to a higher level by works which still remain, and they were thus made to water the great plain to the south; a very strong reservoir raising their surface twenty feet, and an aqueduct from this leading the stream to the plain.[2] Sir C. Wilson thinks this a strong corroboration of the claims of Tell Hum to be Capernaum, but when so many doctors differ I feel it would be presumptuous in me arbitrarily to decide.

From Tell Hum we rode slowly on past a wady which turns sharply to the north-west, on the way to Chorazin, the present Kerazeh. The path for a time led along the bank, over the water; a long slope stretching slowly upwards on our left. The surface lay well-nigh buried under a rain of fragments of basalt of all sizes—the image of utter chaos—strewn there for untold ages before Christ's day, just as now; for the ruin from this fire-shower out of long-dead volcanoes was under His eyes, as

[1] Matt. xxiii. 27.

[2] What some authorities think an aqueduct is, however, asserted by others to be a road.

He passed, as it was under ours. Half a mile beyond Tell Hum, the mouth of the Chorazin wady opened to the lake: a sight never to be forgotten. The soil which had spread itself over the basalt-covered ground, and which was the product of the action of rain, air, heat, and cold, in ages of ages, proved, when a section of the underlying bed was presented by the sides and bottom of the wady, to be simply a skin over a chaos of black boulders. The sides and bottom of the gorge, worn by floods from the hills, were only a heaped-up confusion of millions of black stones, of all shapes and sizes, offering a track up which no man or beast of burden could by any possibility have made way. This, too, must have been the same in Christ's day, and, for that matter, in Adam's.

Beyond this wild, dark Tartarus-mouth, some spots of soil were comparatively clear; at least, loose patches of grain were springing up among the stones. The banks were fringed with bushes, and here and there were actually spots which to some perceptible degree had been cleared of stones by industrious peasant-labour. Two donkeys passed, each bearing a side of wild boar flesh, a man with a long brass-bound gun walking at the side of his beasts. The flats of the Jordan, where the river enters the lake, had yielded this prize, for wild swine are very plentiful on the edge of the marsh-land, where they are sheltered by thickets of reeds and bushes. One could hardly imagine where such flesh could be used, with so many of the scanty population Mussulmans or Jews. But it is almost a figure to speak of population at all. The wilds of America, even in recently-settled parts, have as many inhabitants as once-crowded Palestine. I proposed that we should keep on, and go to the north by the path which skirts the west bank of the Jordan, but my dragoman would not hear of it. The Arabs, he said, would

most likely plunder us. Two friends at Damascus afterwards told me they had ridden south by this track, without harm, "though," added they, "at one point a couple of Arabs from an encampment near rode down on us with their spears couched, yelling as they came, but they stopped when we drew our revolvers, and presently rode off."

Low hills trend back from the shore till you come to the delta of the Jordan, and the whole surface of the ground continues to be covered with black boulders; here smaller, there larger. The marshy plain through which the river enters the lake is wide and perfectly flat; sown in its driest parts; left to the buffaloes elsewhere. The peasants who cultivate the useful portion of it come from a distance, and live here for three months in tents; returning to their hamlets after the harvest. A large building on the eastern shore of the lake proved to be a magazine for grain, so that there must be considerable tillage. It stood on a pleasant green slope leading up into the hills, which were wooded with oak: a great contrast to the western side, where we were. Up the glen before us was perhaps the scene of the miraculous feeding of the multitude.

Turning to the north-west, towards Kerazeh, the path led over the slope of low hills, strewn with boulders of shining black basalt. There was, indeed, no path; nor could the country have been more utterly desolate. Chorazin itself stands in the midst of such desolation as must be seen to be believed. Millions of boulders cover the ground everywhere, as far as the eye can reach. The horses could hardly, in fact, get a footing between them, either in climbing the slopes on the way from the lake or among the ruins themselves. Yet even in this vision of chaos the stones lay less thickly in some spots than in others, and these the poor fellahîn had in some cases sown with grain. On one slope were a few Arab tents, before

which a woman in her long blue gown, reaching down to her feet, and very graceful, was gathering dry thistle-stalks for fuel, while a few camels were grazing among the stones. Nowhere, however, did rock crop out: the rain of boulders was entirely distinct from the hills on which they lay so thickly. The terrible volcanic energy in this district ceased long before the historic period—how long no one can tell—and hence the aspect of the landscape must have been the same in Christ's day as at present. How any considerable community, such as Chorazin must have been, from the extent of its ruins, which cover as much ground as those of Tell Hum, could have lived in such a region, it is very hard to imagine. There was no Roman road passing near, to bring travellers, while the inhabitants could hardly have gained subsistence from the lake, since they were not less than two miles from it and as much as 700 feet above it. Yet the ruins speak of some wealth. Lintels, doorposts, heads of pillars, and carved stones, all of basalt, are scattered about, and there are the remains of a synagogue, also of basalt, with Corinthian capitals, niche-heads, and other ornaments, cut, not as at Tell Hum, in limestone, but in the hard black trap.

One very interesting feature of the ruins is that many of the dwelling-houses are still tolerably perfect, though in the days of St. Jerome,[1] Chorazin had long been deserted. In some cases the walls are six feet high, of square blocks of imperishable basalt, or lava, forming houses of different sizes, but generally square, the largest measuring nearly thirty feet inside; with one or two columns down the middle, to support the roof, which was apparently flat, as in the present houses of Palestine. As a rule, however, the dwellings are very small; in fact, only tiny hollow cubes. The walls are about two feet thick, sometimes of loose

[1] A.D. 331—420.

blocks, sometimes of masonry, with a low doorway in the centre of one side; the only windows being slits a foot high and six inches broad. One or two of the houses were divided into four chambers, but most of them had only one room, though some had two. These venerable remains have certainly not been built since Jerome's day, so that they have stood tenantless for at least fifteen hundred years, and may well have been standing in the days when our Lord from time to time wandered among them, doing those mighty works which were yet, as at Bethsaida and Capernaum, ineffectual to bring the population to thoughtfulness and repentance.[1] It helps one to realise better the daily life of our Saviour, to see in what poor, barren spots He laboured; following the lost sheep of Israel to such a forbidding wilderness. There lay among the ruins a huge stone, four feet thick, round like a mill-stone, and as large, once the great roller of an oil-press, showing that in former times olives must have grown somewhere near, though it is hard to realise where they could have found soil, for the only trees to be seen were one or two figs, growing up in the houses so long abandoned.

From Chorazin to Safed the path, if such it can be called, led down one side of the wady over which Chorazin stands, and up the other. Such a scramble comes rarely in any man's life, for it was simply a dexterous effort of the horse at each step to get its feet safely between lumps of basalt, the descent teaching a fine lesson in leaning back, and the upward climb leading to the most endearing embrace of the quadruped's neck. The gorge passed, a rolling table-land succeeded, only a little less barren than the slope up from Tell Hum, with no population but some Arabs with black tents and white-faced cattle, the leanness of the beasts speaking for the barrenness of the

[1] Matt. xi. 21, 23.

soil around. Bedouins are found in all parts of Palestine, but chiefly in those that are easily accessible from the Jordan or from the southern desert, though they seem at different times to have intruded more or less thickly over the whole country. The Holy Land is so hemmed in by the great wilderness, dear to tent-life, that there is always a strong temptation to mount the passes to the hill-country, where springs and wells spread a fertility quite unknown in the desert, except after the rains. Encampments from the mountains of Gilead, the plains of the Haurân, the uplands of Moab, the great southern desert, and the plains of Philistia and Sharon, are at all times to be found making their way, like the tribes of Abraham or Jacob in old days, into the hill-country with its green plains and tempting valleys. Yet the settled population seem slowly gaining ground, for the nomads in Lower Galilee, and even in the Plain of Sharon, are only a miserable remnant of once-powerful tribes, destined, it is to be hoped, before many years, to disappear again into their sandy wastes. As in the earliest ages, the Arab and the peasant are bitter foes, for the one is an idle thief and cut-throat by nature, the other an industrious tiller of the ground. Though intolerably proud, the tent-dwellers, I fear, can hardly boast pure Arab blood, for I have often seen Nubians and other black men as slaves in their camps; refugees from Damascus and other towns, who, once admitted to a tribe, may marry into it. Tents are fixed in any spot only as long as the pasturage and water last; a few blows of the mallet, and the pegs are pulled up, the coverings rolled together, the poles tied in bundles, and the camp moves to some other haunt, just, one may suppose, as the Hebrews did in their forty years' wanderings. I have noticed already that encampments are rarely near water, perhaps because the lesson has been learned

by experience that the ground near springs, since it usually lies low, is apt to be unhealthy. One might suppose that the situations chosen would at least always be safe, but it sometimes happens that when the bed of a wady has been, for some reason, selected, a sudden rain-storm floods down from the hills and carries away the whole camp, flocks and all, reminding one of the foolish man who built his house on the sand.[1]

East of the Jordan you sometimes meet with large numbers of tents; but in Palestine the stony pasture, and the comparative scarcity of water, cause a division of the tribes into numerous small camps, much like knots of gipsy tents as to number. The tent has generally nine poles, by no means straight, those in the centre being highest, to make the rain pass off. The open side is always turned to the sun, that the covered back may give better shelter; and the site is usually so carefully chosen that even strong winds rarely blow the tent down; in part, doubtless, from its being so low. The coverings are thick and well woven, so that rain does not easily get through them; but the Arabs suffer greatly in winter from rheumatism, which must in all ages have been prevalent, at least in the country parts of Palestine, from the poor provision for shelter in the cold nights.

The dress of these tent-people is everywhere much as I have described it in previous pages, and is in all probability the same as in the days of the patriarchs. A blue cotton shirt, reaching below the knees, or to them, with a strap round the waist to keep it to the person, is the general summer costume, with the addition of a sheepskin jacket, the woolly side inwards, and the outside dyed red, or of a woollen striped "abba," in cold weather; but the legs are always bare, and look miserable enough in a keen

[1] Matt. vii. 26.

wind. The "kefiyeh" is the universal head-dress. Sandals are still in frequent use—mere shoe-soles, kept on the foot by a hide thong, brought from the heel, passed through the head of one of two short straps rising at the sides, then passed round the great toe, and secured by a button to the second strap, at the other side. This, no doubt, is the sandal of Scripture.

An armed Arab is a formidable-looking personage, but he could do little against modern weapons. A very long-barrelled gun, with a flint lock, brass fittings, and a light stock, stones often serving for shot or ball; a sword like a large knife; and a long tufted spear or lance, form his full equipment; for shields, bows, and short spears are now out of use. On the east of the Jordan, however, one still finds a strange survival from the Middle Ages, in occasional coats of linked iron mail, down to the knees, and an iron helmet with a spike on the top, and a light plate in front to protect the nose. Some Bedouins, but not many, are in their way very religious, strictly observing the hours of Moslem prayer, with preliminary washing of the hands, arms, legs, and face, where possible. Education is regarded as a degradation, and is therefore despised; so that the traditions, exaggerated at each repetition, are strange confusions in the end, widely-separate events being jumbled together as well as sadly distorted. The ruling passion seems to be avarice, but in this the Bedouins are not different from Orientals generally, old and young. Like the ancient Jews, they have a hatred of the sea, and would much rather walk round the Lake of Galilee than save any amount of time or trouble by crossing it in a boat.

Khan Yusef, about two miles north-west of Chorazin, was the first building we reached, and it stands alone for miles in every direction, forming one of the resting-places

for caravans on the so-called highway to Damascus. It is a large rectangular building of stone, with an arched entrance and battlemented walls; and there is the usual open space within for beasts, a well to water them, open chambers for merchandise, and others over them for travellers, reached by a balcony running round three sides. Everything, of course, is more or less in ruins: indeed, it was not easy to climb the steps to the top of the wall, or to the sleeping-places, which are only bare cells, often without doors. There were no visitors when I was there, and the only creature outside was a peasant—wondrously dirty in his cotton skull-cap and old whitey-brown shirt—tending a few cattle and sheep.

CHAPTER XLVI.

SAFED, GISCALA, KADESH.

SAFED lies about five miles on the road, or no-road, to the north-west of Khan Yusef, but although the khan stands 800 feet above the Lake of Galilee, the journey to Safed is a continual ascent of nearly 2,000 feet more. The hill on which the town stands is a weary climb. The rocks shine out bare on its steep sides, looking like the ribs of a skeleton, all the "flesh" having been washed away by the winter rains of ages. The track is lonely and desolate, seldom showing even a goatherd with his goats. Safed itself lies hidden by the top of the mountain, but the view looking down towards the lake in its deep cradle of hills is very striking; the dark blue of the water seeming additionally lovely because of the desolate setting of bare heights. The weather was beautiful, the sun setting in a cloudless sky, and lighting up the mountains with mild softened brightness before it was hidden in the west. At last, after descending a picturesque ravine watered by a fine streamlet, the path led up to the town, which rises in terraces on steep slopes, almost in the form of the letter Y, and passes over to the plateau above in three entirely distinct sections.

The houses are well built of stone, and surround a castle which rises above them; valleys and gardens, with vines, and olive and fig trees, lying between the different

parts of the town. It is not easy to ascertain the exact population, for, while the Memoirs of the Palestine Fund say there are 3,000 Mahommedans, 1,500 Jews, and 50 Christians, Guérin speaks of 7,000 Jews, 6,000 Mahommedans, and 150 Christians. The castle, which is a memorial of the wonderful energy of the Crusaders, having been built by King Fulke about A.D. 1140, stands in a great elliptical enclosure, surrounded by a ditch partly cut in the living rock, but now in great measure filled up. In its glory it was flanked by ten towers, but the outer casing of hewn stones has been removed for building material, and the inner rubble alone remains. The castle itself, which stood inside this circumvallation, had a second ditch round it, but the walls have fallen into a confused mass of rubbish, from which stones are constantly being taken away for new buildings. Great towers, now in ruins, once rose at the angles, and huge cisterns, still remaining, supplied water for the garrison, while in the centre a massive keep or citadel dominated the city. So mighty was the living force of the Western world seven hundred years ago, even in this sequestered nook of Palestine!

A great Rabbinical school which flourished here in the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth won for Safed among the Jews the high distinction of one of the four holy cities of Israel, in which prayers must be said several times a week, if the earth at large is to escape destruction: the supplicants who set so high a value on their intercessions being among the most wretched and ignorantly bigoted of men. The Safed Jews, long defenceless among their bitter enemies the Mahommedans, now enjoy peace and safety under the protection of Austria, most of them being from Austrian Poland. They are, however, for the most part, unutterably poor; owing their

very bread to the doles of their richer brethren in Europe. To anyone not of their number, their life seems a mere loathsome misery, for they are intolerably dirty, and their quarter is so foul that fever breaks out when the rain stirs up the mud of their lanes. A few give themselves to trade, or, as at Hebron, to vine-growing, but all alike are blind fanatics, petrified in ignorant Pharisaism and in servility to their Rabbis, while indulging in a loose and casuistical morality. A false oath to a Gentile is nothing; to a Rabbi it is a mortal sin. They will not carry a handkerchief in their pockets on the Sabbath, because that would be bearing a burden, but they tie it round their waist, and then it is only a girdle. To walk with heavy-soled shoes on the sacred day would be to carry a burden, and to tread on grass during its hours is to offend, for is not this a kind of threshing? One cannot help thinking of the grave controversy in Christ's day, among the Rabbis, whether it was permissible to eat an egg that had been laid on the Sabbath! To wind up a watch after sunset on Friday would be a dreadful matter; but while shrinking from such an act, the precisian too seldom hesitates to live a profane and ungodly life.

The Safed Jews are very tenacious of Old Testament usages, and hence they favour polygamy; some of them having two or three wives. The duty of marrying the childless wife of a deceased brother is also still maintained, in accordance with the old command: "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without, unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall take her to him to wife; and it shall be, that the first-born which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel."[1]

[1] Deut. xxv. 5—10.

The custom which enabled Ruth to get Boaz for a husband is thus still honoured in this spot of Palestine. In the synagogue, phylacteries are still worn on the brow and arm, as in Russia, in fancied obedience to the injunction, "Thou shalt bind them"—that is, certain words of the Law—"for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes."[1]

Safed has a climate very like that of Jerusalem, the cities being about the same height above the sea, so that it is hot in summer and cold in winter. It might seem natural, therefore, that well-to-do inhabitants would go down in the cold season to Tiberias, as the better class in Jerusalem used to winter at Jericho; but deadly fevers rage on the lake-shore in the winter. Safed, it should be added, is noted in summer for its countless scorpions and numerous snakes.

The view from the ruined castle is very fine. The Lake of Galilee in its whole extent lies at one's feet. Tabor rises above the hills around it, and to the west there is a glimpse of Esdraelon. The citadel was once considered impregnable, but in July, 1266, the Christian garrison quitted it under articles of capitulation to Sultan Bibars, whose promises, however, were shamelessly broken, the whole force, numbering 2,000 men, being killed, while the priests were only spared that they might afterwards be flayed alive. The castle was brought to its present condition by the great earthquake of 1837, after having stood the storms of time for more than six hundred years. The town beneath it shared in the destruction. In the Jews' quarter, especially, the ruin was terrible, the houses being built on a slope so steep that the roofs of one terrace seem to be the street before those of the terrace above. Badly built, one row fell crashing

[1] Deut. vi. 8.

down on another, leaving no chance of escape, but burying the population in the wreck.

The great Rabbi Hillel is believed to have been buried at Meiron, about three miles west of Safed; a tomb cut in the rock, with about thirty places for the dead, being pointed out as his. Near this chamber, which is about twenty-five feet long and eighteen broad, there is a long stone building with a large space inside, at the end of which are three tombs that are especially venerated. Here Mr. Hackett,[1] an American professor, was fortunate enough to see a great celebration in honour of the dead Rabbis, some of the details of which are well worth quoting. Over the graves hung burning lamps, beside which crowds knelt at their devotions, while multitudes had spread their sleeping-mats beneath stalls raised for the time along the walls. Strong drink was in great demand from numerous sellers, some of those praying being already drunk. Here, a couple of men exhibited sword-play, to the clash of cymbals; a little way from them was a group of dancers, for whom the spectators sang and clapped hands. But the special object of the gathering was to burn costly gifts in honour of the ancient teachers. The long court was densely crowded soon after dark to witness these offerings. At one corner of a gallery, placed so that all could see it, was a basin of oil, in which whatever was to be burned was dipped, to make it more inflammable. A shawl, worth fifteen pounds sterling, was the first article offered; the men clapping hands and the women shrieking for joy, as it was set on fire by a blazing torch. Other offerings of shawls, scarves, handkerchiefs, books, and the like, were then handed up, and burnt in the same way; the crowd from time to time yelling with delight, and the uproar

[1] *Illustrations of Scripture*, p. 242.

continuing through great part of the night. What could this mean? Is it a confused tradition of the offerings to the Temple in ancient times? These, however, were *not* burnt.

About three miles north of Meiron, the village of El-Jish—the ancient Giscala—recalls memories of the great apostle of the Gentiles, for his ancestors lived here before emigrating to Tarshish.[1] It lies on a hill which falls steeply to the east, at the mouth of a flat, well-tilled valley, through which flows a strong brook bordered by rich green bushes. One of the leaders of the Jews in the last despairing struggle against Titus at Jerusalem was a native of the village, vindicating by his valour the old reputation of Galilee as the native land of brave men. The country around is without trees to the south-east, though both at Meiron and El-Jish there are fine groves of olive and fig trees. In the open landscape of hill and valley, a few herds of sheep or goats are to be seen, but there is not a little poor land, and the soil is not much tilled: more from the want of population than its own poverty. Here and there a traveller on an ass, often without bridle or head-gear, passes, but she-asses seem to be preferred, as being easier in their step. The colt running at its mother's side is a pleasant sight, recalling the simple dignity of our Lord's entrance to Jerusalem, and bringing back with force the full meaning of the prophet's words: "Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass."[2]

The brook which waters the valley of Giscala flows in a permanent stream north-west, and then, bending in a wide arc to the south and east, runs at last into the Lake of

[1] Jerome, *de Viris Illustr.* 5. [2] Zech. ix. 9.

Merom, or El-Huleh. Galilee in this part is a land of brooks and springs, for two perennial streams flow to the south in the neighbourhood of Safed, uniting after a time, before crossing the Plain of Gennesaret, on their way to the Lake of Galilee. About four miles almost north of El-Jish, in a shallow valley, is the village of Yarun, which has near it the remains of a large church, built of great blocks of stone. Columns, and portions of moulded door-posts, with finely-cut capitals, are freely scattered about; many of them lying in and around a large rain-water pond. This grand building was once paved with mosaic, large pieces of which are still perfect below the soil; and not a few of its finely-carved spoils are seen built into the mosque.

This district is, in part, inhabited by a fanatical sect of Moslems known as Metawilehs, who keep rigidly aloof from the members of any other faith. To touch the contents of a fruit-stall belonging to one of them rouses the fiercest indignation, for the finger of any person not of their own creed pollutes. They would rather break a jar than drink from it after it had touched unclean lips—that is, those of anyone but a Metawileh. As contact with a corpse defiled an Israelite,[1] so a stranger touching the clothing of one of this fierce sect makes it unclean. As with the Jews, "it is an unlawful thing for a man to keep company, or come to one of another nation,"[2] a law so rigid that St. Peter, even after he had been enlightened by a vision from God, dissembled at Antioch, and needed to be rebuked for his bearing by the more manly St. Paul.[3] Such an attitude towards those round provokes universal hatred, which the Metawilehs liberally return. Unless, as Captain Conder thinks, they are Persian Moslems, they may be an apostate body of Jews, still retaining

[1] Num. xix. 11. [2] Acts x. 28. [3] Gal. ii. 12, 13.

the ceremonial law of Leviticus, though accepting Mahomet as the Prophet of God.

From Safed to Lake Huleh, the ancient Sea of Merom, is a gradual descent of nearly 3,000 feet, over hill and dale, the valleys running mainly east and west. Some time before reaching the lake, the country opens, and the lake itself lies in one of the pleasantest valleys of Palestine. The sheet of water is about two miles broad at its widest part, and four miles long; but a great marsh of papyrus reed stretches for nearly six miles north of the clear surface, covering from one to three miles in breadth. Through this flows the Jordan, as yet only a small stream, several tributaries joining it from different wadys on its course, which, as it passes through the miniature forest, widens into small lakes, the haunt of innumerable water-fowl, as the outer beds of reeds are the lairs of swine and of other wild beasts. It was to this region that Herod the Great used to come in his early manhood, to hunt the game which then swarmed in the marshes even more than now, distinguishing himself by the strength of his javelin-throw, and the fierce energy which remained untired when all his attendants were exhausted. On the west, the Safed hills open out into long sweeping plains and valleys of pleasant green; but on the eastern side there is no such broad border of open land, the hills rising close to the pear-shaped basin of the lake. The water is from twenty to thirty feet deep, its surface lying almost exactly on the same level as the sea, but nearly 900 feet above the Lake of Galilee.[1]

It was in this district that the great battle was fought which threw Northern Palestine into the hands of Joshua. After Ai had been taken, and the Southern Canaanite league had been driven in hideous rout down the pass of

[1] Riehm.

Beth-horon, the Israelite leader seems to have found Central Palestine left open to him without further resistance, not a few towns being deserted in the terror inspired by his destruction of Jericho and Ai.[1] But the north was still unconquered, and found a champion in Jabin, King of Hazor. This ancient capital has been identified by Sir Charles Wilson with the ruins of Harrah, on a hill-top about a mile back from the west side of the lake; but Captain Conder finds it in Haderah, about three miles farther inland, almost in the same direction. Harrah has at least the more striking remains to justify the honour, for the hill-top is still partly surrounded by a strong enclosure, once flanked by square towers, both the walls and the towers being built of great blocks of rudely-hewn stone, put together without cement. A number of rock-cut cisterns still speak of the water-supply; and foundations formed of polygonal masses of stone show where the principal structures of the city have been, though the whole site has for ages been desolate, except when some poor shepherd has driven his flock to pasture among the ruins. Round the king of this primæval fortress-town were gathered the heads of all the native tribes which had not yet yielded to Joshua, including not only those of the north, but some from the "ghor" of the Jordan south of the Lake of Galilee;[2] from the sea-coast plain of Philistia; from the slopes over the plain of Sharon; and from the recently-built fortress of Jebus, the future Jerusalem. Indeed, even Hivite chieftains from the valley of Baalbek, under the shadow of Hermon, rallied for this last effort to drive back the Hebrew invasion. All these "went out, they and all their hosts with them, even as the sand is upon the sea shore in multitude; and when all these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom,

[1] Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, ii. 408. [2] Josh. xi. 1.

to fight against Israel."[1] At Ai and Gibeon the battle had, so far as we know, been one of infantry only; but the main strength of the enemy at Merom consisted in "horses and chariots very many," now first mentioned in the story of the conquest, though familiar to us in connection with even earlier ages, from the records of the early Egyptian kings in their Palestine campaigns. Such a force could not act in the hills, and therefore the wide plain beside Lake Huleh was chosen as a battle-field. The Hebrews, destined to live in the hills, could not employ cavalry, and for this, among other reasons, were prohibited from making use of it. A command was therefore issued to hough the horses and burn the chariots which they might take, thus delaying their introduction into the nation till the showy reign of Solomon, centuries later. No details of Joshua's movements are given, beyond the fact that on the eve of the battle he was within a day's march of the lake. The victory was apparently gained by the suddenness with which the Hebrews swooped down from the hills on Jabin's confederacy, throwing them into confusion which soon turned into panic and headlong flight. As had been commanded, the horses taken were ham-strung and the chariots burned; the chase after the fugitives continuing westward over the mountains to Sidon, on the coast, and eastward we know not how far. This victory closed the serious work of the Israelite campaigns, and left the land open to the tribes; Naphtali obtaining the region of Merom, and a wide stretch north and west. But the Canaanites, though stunned and overpowered for the time, still remained more numerous than their conquerors, so that Hazor, which Joshua had burned to the ground, was in after-times rebuilt, and became the capital of another Jabin, who long oppressed the northern

[1] Josh. xi. 4, 5.

tribes, till overthrown by the crushing defeat of his general, Sisera, in the great battle of Tabor, when Deborah and Barak led the Hebrews.[1]

Barak—"the Lightning"—was a native of Kadesh, the ruins of which lie four miles north-west of El-Huleh, on a hill overlooking a fine plain that bears the same name. A modern village, with a population of perhaps 200 Moslems, its stone houses very ruinous, stands on the spur of the hill, beside a good spring, and a rain-pond such as marks nearly every Palestine hamlet; the land around is arable, with fig and olive trees interspersed. There are no traces now of the Canaanite city, but it was one of the oldest in the land, for it is mentioned in the list of Thothmes III. of Egypt, who conquered Palestine about 1,600 years before Christ. Barak, as a native of Kadesh,[2] was likely to feel the woes of his people intensely, living as he did in the very midst of their oppressors.

"Harosheth of the Gentiles," where Sisera lived, seems to have been a stronghold on the river Kishon, at the point where the northern hills come closest to those of Carmel; and still survives in the village of El-Harathiyeh. In Barak's battle the chariots of the Canaanites would be driven towards this point if they could move through the softened ground at all, and they must have been mixed in hideous confusion, horses, chariots, and men, as they crowded into the jaws of the pass, which is often only a few rods wide. The river, swollen at the time by the tempest, runs in constant curves, so that, in such a frightful pressure of men, wheels, and beasts, it would be impossible to avoid being hurled into it at many points: the deep mud as well as the waters destroying thousands. Harosheth lies about eight miles from Megiddo, where the entrance to Esdraelon could be most easily barred.

[1] Judg. iv. 2. [2] Judg. iv. 6.

An enormous double mound near El-Harathiyeh—the Arabic form of the word Harosheth—rises just below where the Kishon beats against Carmel. Here rose the castle of Sisera; the watch-tower of "the Gentiles" who then lorded it over Israel.[1]

If Kadesh has nothing to reveal of these old times, there are abundant remains of Roman splendour—ruins of temples, tombs built of huge blocks of stone, and elaborately carved sarcophagi. Such structures, in so secluded a spot, forcibly proclaim the wealth of ancient times, and the density with which regions now desolate for ages must once have been peopled; for what must that empire have been which could create, even here, such an astonishing display of architectural splendour?

Our tents were pitched on a rise of ground under the low rocky hills, some little distance from the lake. A beautiful pool below the cliff, which rose in successive steps mantled with green, was delightful in its trembling clearness, as the water moved towards the outlet through which it flowed in a soft stream to the lake, past a small hamlet of wretched huts. This camping-ground was evidently used by all who came or went up or down the lake, for the ground was littered with broken straw and refuse. There was plenty of space to set up the tents where these annoyances and the accompanying vermin would not have troubled us, but the ignorant peasants who managed the matter had no conception of choosing any but the one spot that had been used for ages. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to get the ground inside and around the tent swept as well as possible, and some of the largest stones taken out of the little circle which for the time was our place of rest. As the evening drew on, our solitude was invaded by a great drove of mules,

[1] See *ante*, Vol. II., p. 261.

laden with huge nettings full of brown jars, coming from Damascus to the south. To get these jars off without breaking seemed impossible, yet it was the simplest matter in the world when one knew how to do it. The loosening of a string enabled the sensible creature to walk from beneath its burden, which was sustained by two men on each side, and then carried to a corner, where all the loads were speedily set down in rows. Next came a dozen mules and asses with walnuts from Lebanon, the unclean crowd of drivers of both jars and fruit taking up their quarters for the night on the ground beside us, after cooking their simple evening meal. Some of the peasants from points near the lake soon visited the varied gathering; among them a poor man ill of ague, and an unfortunate child so bitten by vermin that he seemed covered with a violent eruption.

The fellahîn, or peasants, of the Holy Land seem from their language to be descendants, though of mixed blood, of the old Bible races of the land. They may be regarded, in fact, as modern Canaanites, for it is quite certain that no vicissitudes of history ever destroy a whole people, and the Scriptures tell us that in the case of the Hebrew occupation of the country, many of the old inhabitants remained among the settlements of the invaders. In the same way large numbers of the old British race continued to live among the early English, after the successful descents on our country from beyond the sea; and our present population shows that when these conquerors were in their turn subdued by invaders, they were very far from being extirpated. The country dialect of Palestine is a survival of the old Aramaic, spoken by the mass of the people in the days of Christ, and closely connected with the Hebrew of the Bible. Thus, almost all words describing natural features,

such as rocks, torrents, pools, springs, and the like, are the same on the lips of the peasantry of to-day as they are in the pages of the Hebrew Scriptures, though Arabic has necessarily, in the course of ages, influenced the local vocabulary, the Mahommedan conquest bringing with it that language.

The religion of Palestine is professedly Mahommedanism, but though the forms of that creed are maintained in large towns, I very seldom saw any traces of it in country parts, for mosques are almost unknown in small places, and prayer in public, so constantly seen in other Mahommedan regions, is very rare. There is, however, in nearly every village, a small whitewashed building with a low dome—the "mukam," or "place," sacred to the eyes of the peasants; the word for it being still that used in the Bible for the holy "places" of the Canaanites, "upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree."[1] In almost every landscape such a landmark gleams from the top of some hill, just as, doubtless, something of the same kind did in the old Canaanite ages; or you meet it under some spreading tree covered with offerings of rags tied to the branches, or near a fountain; the trees overshadowing them being held so sacred that every twig falling from them is reverently stored inside the "mukam." Anything a peasant wishes to guard from theft is perfectly safe if put within such a holy building. No one will touch it, for it is believed that every structure of this kind is the tomb of some holy man, whose spirit hovers near, and would be offended by any want of reverence to his resting-place. Nor is this superstition without countenance from another practice, for it is no uncommon thing to see an empty shrine of plastered

[1] Deut. xii. 2. The word is "makom" in Hebrew, and "mukam" in the present language of the country.

brick, built so that the imaginary dead should lie on the right side, facing Mecca. But, amidst this fanciful simplicity, the spirit of true religion, found in some measure in even the rudest of faiths, is delightfully symbolised by the presence of a pitcher of cold water, put each day by kindly hands inside the door, to refresh the thirsty traveller.

The departed saints, or sheikhs, of these "mukams," are the local gods of the peasantry; some of them being supposed to have power for a greater, others for a smaller, distance round the shrines which commemorate them. To please them brings benefits of all kinds; to offend them is the worst of bad fortune: a belief so deeply rooted that a man would rather confess a crime, if taken to a "mukam," than perjure himself in the hearing of the saint, and thus incur his ghostly displeasure. No one will enter such a "place" without first taking off his shoes. If there be sickness in a house, the wife or mother will light a lamp and put it in the holy building; and sheep are at times killed near it, and eaten as a sacrificial feast in honour of the "sheikh." Processions, again, are made to these lowly sanctuaries, as I have myself seen on more than one occasion; the men, rich and poor, marching in their best clothes, with rude music before them, closing their pilgrimage by a solemn "zikr," in which, a ring having been formed, they chant verses from the Koran, amidst wild swaying backwards and forwards, and great excitement. It is a strange fact in connection with these "mukams" that in many cases the names of the "sheikhs" supposed to rest under them are simply those of apostles or other Christian heroes, such as St. Paul, St. Peter, St. Matthew, and St. George. The peasantry have, in fact, continued their own worship on sites once occupied by churches of the Crusaders, and, in their simple ignorance,

have adopted Christian saints as their local divinities. This may, perhaps, show that amidst all the corruption and degeneracy of the European invaders of the two Crusading centuries, there was not a little that was good: a conjecture which is supported by the fact that kindly traditions of the benevolence of the monks in their convents still linger in such names as "the Monastery of Good Luck," "the Charitable Convent," and the like, by which some of them are lovingly remembered even to this day. Depend upon it, there was many a good soldier of Jesus Christ in those times, in all sections of the Church, just as there are many, thank God, now.

Utterly uneducated, generation after generation, the ignorance of the peasants is extreme. Nothing is too childish for them to believe. Dervishes, or holy men, wander over the land, often poor and filthy, and always living on alms, but everywhere greatly venerated. Some of them are snake-charmers, others eat scorpions, and still others pierce their cheeks with knives; but many seem to rely principally on their dirtiness. Evil spirits have a great place in the thoughts of the peasant. The "jan," who has for a body the tall sand-pillars of the whirlwind, appals him; the "afrit" is the equivalent of our ghost; the ghoul of the graveyard feeds on the dead; goblins play all manner of antic tricks; and, to close all, there is Satan, the arch enemy. Along the roads, or rather tracks, little piles of stones often recur, at points from which some famous holy place is first visible.

A village in Palestine is wretched beyond conception, consisting of miserable cabins, stuck down in no order, with a lane a few feet broad for a passage between them; the material sometimes mud; sometimes mud and loose stones; the shape square; the flat mud roof supported on rough crooked poles and covered with grass, weeds, or

stalks of maize; the door a mere apology for protection. There cannot be said to be any furniture, and any idea of cleanliness seems unknown. The men spend their time in agriculture, often miles away from their home; the children look after the sheep and goats; the women fetch water, grind the flour, and do what little cooking is needed. The food of the community is principally bread dipped in oil, rice, olives, syrup of grapes, melted butter, eggs, and vegetables.

But to resume: the mules, with their pottery and walnuts, were gone before daylight, at 5·30, so that at breakfast we had the place to ourselves. That Englishmen should be passing was enough to bring a poor man, ill of dropsy, with his wife, mother, and child, to see if he could get relief. My companion fortunately had his tapping instrument with him, and operated on the poor sufferer, and as he gradually found relief, the gratitude of the little group knew no bounds. Several sick people had been gladdened the night before by doses from the few phials I had with me, and the news had spread, for, except in the case of a traveller passing, there is no such thing as even an approach to medical help. To see the poor folks crowding round the tent brought to mind the story how, "at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, . . . and all the city was gathered together at the door, and He healed many that were sick of divers diseases."[1] How wretched is the position of the poor now, as it was then, with no medical help available, or even any rude recipes resulting from hereditary experience and observation; doomed simply to endure, without alleviation, whatever ailments may befall them! Civilisation has a bright side in this respect, if it have its spots in others.

[1] Matt. viii. 16; Mark i. 32.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MEROM, DAN, BELFORT.

THERE could hardly be a more beautiful place than the Lake of Merom, or El-Huleh. The rich plains, here brown with tilth, there bright with crops, yonder stretching out in succulent pastures dotted with flocks; the blue lake sleeping beneath the hills, long reed-beds bending their feathery tops in the soft air, silver streams netting the landscape; the waters full of water-fowl, the trees vocal with birds, the flowers humming with bees; the native hamlet, the Arab camp, the herdsman afield, the ploughs, drawn by ox, or ass, or camel, slowly moving over the lea; the flat-headed black buffalo delighting himself in the pools and the soft marshy coolness; the whole canopied by a sky of crystal clearness and infinite height,—make up a landscape of exceeding beauty.

Twenty more asses, laden with tobacco from Damascus, passed us, going south; and at some parts oxen were busy ploughing. The stream from our camping-place ran, fair and broad, across the meadows to the lake; and the great bed of reeds, which till lately threatened to gradually cover the whole of the lake, had been in part cut down by a rich Christian from Beirout, who had bought a tract of the marsh, and, having drained it, was raising good crops from some portions of it. Even now, however, the reeds cover a greater surface than the clear water, and they have a tendency to advance, on account of the quantities of soil

that are brought down by the streams from the north, and which fill up the hollow basin, and will, in the end, turn the lake itself into a meadow, with a channel passing through it. Flocks of sheep were numerous on the right, over the mile and a half between our track and the water, but the hills kept close to us on the left. To the north, the glorious snowy brightness of Hermon and Lebanon looked down from the upper skies.

As we went on, all the soil was given up to pasture, being too moist, I suppose, for any crop but rice, which is sown, though not on a large scale, by the Arabs. Black cattle with white faces—a cross, I should think, with the buffalo—became numerous. On the hill-side and towards it the ground was in parts stony. Broom, covered with golden blossom, carried one's thoughts to far-distant lands. Here and there, on the slopes, cow-houses of stone were to be seen with thatched roofs, slanting from a high back wall, with no windows, but only a door, the property of the Arabs of the district, a half-settled tribe, on this account reckoned degraded by the tent Bedouin. Their houses, built of reeds, with round tops, stand at intervals on the low land bordering the lake, though at some distance from its margin. The reeds having been woven into coarse mats, these are hung up against a framework of poles, and thus flimsy but sufficient dwellings are made—sufficient, that is, in the warmer seasons; but there were black tents, also, showing that the traditions of the desert had not been forgotten. It was thus, I apprehend, in Israel, perhaps to the last, for even Zechariah speaks of "the tents of Judah,"[1] though he lived about 700 years after the occupation of Palestine by his nation, and the consequent adoption of settled life.

Sumach-trees, one of the glories of America, but not

[1] Zech. xii. 7.

common in England, grew in great clumps along the road, and there were two or three fine oaks, low compared with our oaks, but high for Palestine. These are still sacred, as in olden times,[1] and their shade has not ceased to be chosen as the special spot for prayer. Idols were set up in Ezekiel's time under such trees,[2] and incense used to be burned under them to the images.[3] Three Arab women were sitting on the grass beside one, chatting together, and enjoying the mild excitement of looking at our small cavalcade. As we came nearer the top of the marsh-bed, though still a good way from it, a fine stream flowed out from beneath the hills, which at this point came down roughly to the roadside. On the right there was more ploughed land; and one of the great tributaries of the Jordan was winding through the reeds half a mile off. I counted fifteen horses, besides a number of cattle, feeding on a sweet strip of meadow outside the marsh; and close to us flocks of black goats were nibbling among the cliffs on the left. In a field, or rather belt—for there are no separate fields—on the right, twelve yoke of buffaloes—that is, black, flat-headed oxen—were ploughing the land for sowing maize, reminding one of Elisha's twelve yoke, which he left to follow Elijah.[4] Eight asses, laden with reed mats, poles, and household stuff, pattered slowly by. The mother of the family walked at their side, bearing a great bundle of long reeds on her head; the father, a grown son, and a child rode on asses; mean-spirited creatures that they were, to let the woman trudge along, laden, while they journeyed at their ease. At one place wheat was growing both right and left of the track. More stone cow-houses appeared on ledges of the hills, and new clusters of black tents and reed houses on the low ground. There were in all twenty-four of these houses in one village, some with

[1] Isa. i. 29. [2] Ezek. vi. 13. [3] Hos. iv. 13. [4] 1 Kings xix. 19.

the round top covered with camel-wool tent-cloth. A camel and some horses and cattle were about, and some very dirty children, in great glee, driving three kids. A man sat outside one of the houses, weaving in a rude frame the reed mats of which they are built; the reeds, twelve feet high, growing at this place up to the very road. A strip of beans was to be seen at the roadside.

A little further on, a man passed with a long goad in his hand, and on my asking him to let me see it, kindly handed it to me. On one end there was a small spud, or spade, to clear the coulter from earth when ploughing; at the other a sharp iron point stuck out, with short iron chains in loops below it: the prick to urge on the cattle; the chains to startle them into activity by the sudden noise when they were rattled. This is the goad against which it was foolish for the ox to kick: an implement so familiar to St. Paul from daily observation, that it could be used as a figure by our Lord in the heavenly vision.[1] As we came to the head of the reed-beds, the Arab reed and tent villages increased in number, and I was pleased to see long drains cut in the swamp, through the black soil, so that the now firm surface could be ploughed. The ground from the road to the hills on our left was very stony, and the reed houses presented the new feature of having their roofs anchored by ropes passed over them, and secured at each side by heavy stones. The stone cow-houses on the hill-slopes were even better than those I had passed—long and well built, with rounded roofs of small stones bedded deeply in lime. At one village, iron pots for cooking lay outside some of the houses—possibly from our own Birmingham; hand-mill-stones, water-jars, and home-made baskets were at several doors: the whole simple household apparatus of the family. Calves, hens, dogs, and dirty children

[1] Acts ix. 5.

enjoyed themselves in the sun. Mares and their foals nibbled the herbage; but few men or women were to be seen. They were busy inside, or elsewhere.

Rounding the head of the marsh, we saw a wide stretch of rich, flat, wet meadow reaching away to the south, with great numbers of cattle and buffaloes, belonging to the Arabs, feeding on it, but there were no peasants. The Arabs had driven them out. A piece of specially swampy ground had to be crossed, but in a dry space there was a very fine field of beans. The cliffs rose nobly behind us, swallows were skimming overhead, and wheat was growing strong and deeply green under the hills. Another reed village lay at this point, and there were more buffaloes, with green meadows stretching out for miles below the framework of hills. The soil appeared bottomless, if one might judge from the deep wading of the horses through the soft mud, half liquefied by springs oozing out everywhere to the marsh. The hills came close on our left, and rose stony and bare; covered at this place with boulders of black basalt, showing an old volcanic outburst.

We now passed into the charming gorge of the river Hasbâny: the aggregate of many tributaries, rushing in a bright, musical stream towards El-Huleh. Green slopes below fine crags, a fringe of oleanders over the glittering stream, and the glorious sky overhead, made a lovely picture. We rested at the bridge El-Ghajar, in the middle of the day, for refreshment, amidst a paradise of waters and verdure. The bridge, dating from Roman times, has gradually disappeared, till only a single row of the keystones of the arch remains, and before long this, too, will have fallen. The strong buttresses are still in good repair, showing what the whole bridge must once have been; but decay has marked Palestine for its own, and the mock government of the barbarian Turk makes not

the slightest attempt at improvement. The Hasbâny is much the longest branch of the Jordan, flowing from the distant glens of Lebanon, but, besides it, there are the Leddan, which is by far the largest, and the Banias, which is the most beautiful. There is also another stream of good size, which flows from the plain of Ijon, north-west of Dan, and helps to fill the channel of the Jordan. The whole region, indeed, is rich in fountains, the drainage of the mighty chain of Lebanon bursting, almost in full-grown rivers in many cases, from the foot of the mountains, or through the fissures of valley-slopes. The hills on the east side of the great papyrus-marsh of El-Huleh recede towards the north, leaving a wide tract dry enough for cultivation, and largely subdued by the plough, with results which make it the boast of this region for its fertility.

Towards Dan, on the slopes above the bridge over the Hasbâny, I noticed a circle of stones: the first I had seen in Palestine. There are hundreds of such stone monuments in Moab, and not a few elsewhere: the memorials of sun-worship, the primitive faith of the land. On each of the larger stones was a pile of small ones, and rags tied to the bushes around fluttered in the breeze. The piles of small stones were crowned in many cases with bits of pottery: votive offerings, I presume, of the simple peasant or Arab to the divinity supposed by his fathers to haunt the spot, and still half believed in by himself.

Tell-el-Kadi—"the Mound of the Judge," Kadi, like Dan, meaning a judge—is the site of the once famous place, at first known as Laish, which was for ages renowned as the northern ecclesiastical capital of the Ten Tribes. From the Hasbâny it is reached by crossing a delightful rolling country, rich in grass and more ambitious verdure. The "tell" is a great mound 330 paces

long, 270 broad, and from thirty to thirty-eight feet above the plain around. On the top is a Moslem tomb, under a fine oak. Water abounds on every hand, but the most copious stream is on the west of the mound, amidst a thicket of oleanders. This thicket covers the rough sides of a stony slope, strewn with masses of basalt. Making your way down through the bushes, you come presently on a large pool, about fifty paces across: the outburst of the Jordan from the earth: at its very birth full as a river. This amazing fountain is twice as large a stream as that of Banias, and three times as large as that of the Hasbâny, and forms, with these, the sacred river Jordan, after they all unite in Lake Huleh. Great myrtle-trees, figs, and brambles, mingled with the predominant oleanders, guard the pool from easy access, but it was not always so, for the stones of a fine wall, now for the most part fallen into the waters, show that the spring was once carefully fenced in by human hands. Besides this source of the river, there is another higher up the slope, down which it rushes till it mingles with its twin fountain.

On the mound, two great oaks, wide-branching, overlook a plateau covered with venerable ruins, now fallen to such utter decay as to be mere isolated stones and wreck. This, I should think, is the site of the citadel of Dan. Round the whole plateau, moreover, are mounds which appear to be the remains of the ancient walls, and, indeed, at many points in the circuit stones are still in their original positions. Patches of grain had been sown where crowded streets once extended, but the ground was too stony for a great crop. It was too early to distinguish, either here or elsewhere, any tares that might be springing amid the grain, but there must have been abundance of them, for the Arab "zawan,"

Which is just the New Testament ζιζάνιον, or "tare," abounds everywhere, and is a great trouble to the peasant. Before it comes into ear it is very like wheat, and hence is often left till the harvest, lest "while men pluck up the tares, they should root up also the wheat with them."[1] Sometimes, indeed, the stalks are pulled up while the grain is still green; the women I saw weeding the fields in Samaria were probably thus employed, though it is a very doubtful policy to attempt a separation of the weed from the corn thus early. After the "zawan" has come into ear, however, anyone can tell it from the wheat; but its presence is a sore distress to the husbandman from its noxious qualities, should any of its seed mix with the grain. It was a most hateful malignity, therefore, for an enemy to sow tares in the grain-patches; involving in any case immense labour and anxiety, and threatening the ruin of the crop, for darnel or "zawan" left after threshing makes the wheat poisonous, causing dizziness, vomiting, and even convulsions. The whole of the inmates of the Sheffield workhouse, some years ago, unwillingly illustrated this by a universal sickness, which was traced to the presence of this seed in their food.

Dan and its neighbourhood are famous in Bible story. Near it took place the surprise of Chedorlaomer and his allies by Abraham, with his retainers and confederates, when Lot and his family were rescued from slavery. It was a long journey from Hebron to this place, but the father of the faithful was as energetic in this his one warlike undertaking as if he had been a professional soldier. Hurrying past Bethlehem and Jebus, sweeping over the broad plains of Nablus and Esdraelon, and then climbing the hills of Galilee, he attacked his foe, if Josephus be right, on the fifth night from his starting. The paradise

[1] Matt. xiii. 25–30.

around Dan had lulled the enemy into that careless security which has been the ruin of so many Eastern armies. Like Gideon in after-times, the patriarch seems to have fallen upon the foe in the night, that darkness might increase the alarm, and make the rout more hopeless. In wild terror, the host fled through swamps, over hills, through thickets, pursued by their vigorous assailants, till they reached Hobah, on the left hand of Damascus.[1] Only then did Abraham return to Dan, collecting the booty cast away in flight, and adding it to the spoils of the abandoned camp.

Of the second great battle-scene of the district—the defeat of Jabin by Joshua—I have already spoken; a third strange episode in the local history, was the seizure of Laish by the foragers from the narrow limits of Dan, on the slopes above the Philistine plain, when the name was changed to that of the victorious tribe. Laish was a colony of Phœnicians from Sidon, who were busied, like their mother city, in the pursuit of gain, "dwelling carelessly, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure."[2] Far from help, and injuring no one, they little dreamed what was to follow the visit of five strangers who one day strolled into their town: fresh customers, they might fancy, for their Tyrian wares. These visitors were spies, sent from Samson's country—Zorah and Eshtaol—to report to their brethren as to the likeliest field to which they might emigrate, far from the alarms of Philistines, and with more space than the hill-sides of their assigned district afforded. Six hundred men, fully armed, silently creeping up to the Laish gates, not long after, were the terrible issue of the story brought back by the pioneers. There was no mercy in those days to any, except where a treaty had secured

[1] Gen. xiv. 15. [2] Judg. xviii. 27–29.

friendship. To belong to another race was enough to justify massacre. Wholly unprepared, Laish fell an easy prey, but that did not save it; the town was burned to the ground, after every creature in it had been put to the sword. Foolish enough, one would think; for the destruction of the place was so much loss of capital and labour, that needed to be at once expended anew, and the poor citizens would have been useful at least as slaves. But antiquity knew no kindness beyond the limits of a tribe and its allies. Strangers were enemies, to be killed like wild beasts. The world has made some progress since those days, thank God. The mixture of religion and ruffianism in these Danites is passing strange. On their way they had plundered Micah of his gods, which were worth a great deal of money, and had carried off his priest, for they must have religion; and, finally, while their hands were still red with the massacre of a whole population, they set up the stolen idols, and thought themselves safe under Divine protection; especially as a descendant of Moses was their priest.[1]

A little to the west lies the village of Abil—known, in David's time, as Abel-beth-Maachah—on a hill on the east side of the Derdarah, one of the tributaries of the Jordan. Here it was that the embers of a revolt headed by one Sheba, a Benjamite, were stamped out by Joab, after the latter had, on his march north, basely murdered his rival Amasa, David's nephew, at the great stone in Gibeon, leaving him wallowing in his blood "in the midst of the highway," and striding on with the spurted blood of his victim all over him, from his girdle to his sandals.[2] The rams were already battering the town walls when a shrewd woman from the top of the battlements proposed to buy

[1] Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, ii. 450.

[2] 2 Sam. xx. 10; 1 Kings ii. 5.

peace by throwing over the head of the rebel. This done, the assailants retired. In those days Abel-beth-Maachah was "a mother in Israel," that is, so prosperous that the villages round were regarded as offshoots from it—a chief place in the region, in fact; its position easily making it so, for it stood on a mound, in a landscape richly watered and very fertile.[1] Now, however, the wretched village squats on only a portion of the mound, and has but a small population of peasants, who lounge about in squalid rags among their dunghills. In Jeroboam's day, Dan became the Canterbury of the north; its golden calves, housed no doubt in a fine temple, were a "snare to Israel," till Sargon, after Shalmanezer's death, carried off the Ten Tribes to Assyria—their images with them.[2] Indeed, it is a question whether the idols had not been carried off earlier, for Dan was taken by Benhadad I.,[3] and is not mentioned after the time of Jeroboam II.

About seven miles north-west of this anciently populous but now long-silent spot, stands Khian, once a village in Naphtali, which was seized by Benhadad, and whose inhabitants were led off to Assyria by Tiglath Pileser, or Pul.[4] A few miles south-west of Khian, perched on a cliff of the river Litany, 2,343 feet above the sea, and close to the hamlet of Arnun, which is embowered among trees, is the great Crusaders' castle of Belfort. The rock sinks precipitously on three sides, allowing approach only on the fourth. Strong in its position, this imposing fortress was rendered still more so by a ditch round it hewn in the living rock, although on the east

[1] "In the trench," 2 Sam. xx. 15, is, I fear, a wrong translation. The Greek has "in terror." "Close by the wall" seems a better rendering of the Hebrew.

[2] 2 Kings xvii. 9.

[3] 1 Kings xv. 20; 2 Chron. xvi. 4.

[4] 2 Chron. xvi. 4; 1 Kings xv. 20.

it needed no artificial protection whatever. Silent now, how often did those mossy walls echo with the soldiers' songs of distant Europe during the hundred years through which the Crusaders held them! This castle was the bulwark of their kingdom in the north. There had been another on the same site ages before their strong defences rose, for lines of chiselled stones, speaking of ancient masonry, are seen on the walls. A caravan-track from Damascus to Sidon passes close to the fortress on the east bank of the river; used, doubtless, for thousands of years as a settled route of trade. Hence it is very probable that the Sidonians themselves had a castle on the site of Belfort, to protect the road by which their wealth came to them. To-day, however, all is deserted, unless, indeed, when some goatherd and his charge at times seek rest in halls once sacred to the Knights of the Temple.

The view from the gigantic ruins is very striking. A sheer precipice of 1,500 feet in depth overlooks the Litany, which drives its foaming waters through a narrow passage in the hills. Eagles have their nests on the ledges overhanging the terrible abyss, numbers of them flying round whenever they are disturbed by the sight of a human being in their lofty haunts. As they wheel round, to the real danger of anyone standing on the edge of such awful depths, the picture of Deuteronomy rises naturally to the mind: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead you."[1] Nor can one forget the striking words of Isaiah, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles."[2] The opposite bank of the river is not so steep,

[1] Deut. xxxii. 11. [2] Isa. xl. 31.

but rises in a fairly well-cultivated slope, with a few small villages scattered over the landscape. Further to the east rises the ever-magnificent Hermon: its snow crown glittering in the bright spring sun. In the north the huge masses of Lebanon seem to bear up the sky; while to the west stretches out a gently undulating table-land.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

CÆSAREA PHILIPPI.

The way to Banias, the ancient Cæsarea Philippi, situated about two miles east from Dan, lies over well-watered land, which only needs a settled government to become a paradise. The hills were thick with scrub-oak, the old trees having been cut down. Many brooks ran over the slopes; and as we neared Banias, groves of olive and other trees lined the roadside and covered the neighbouring heights and hollows. The way was a continual ascent of successive heights with valleys between, for Banias lies nearly 1,100 feet above the sea, 500 feet higher than Dan. The remains of the ancient city extend fully half a mile beyond the present village; but it is to be hoped that of old the road was better than it is now, for such a chaos of stones, large and small, rolled or thrown into a narrow path between banks, or piled into loose walls, needs to be seen to be believed. The very horses seemed at a loss where to put down their feet. Pieces of old pillars lay at the roadside, or in the orchards near, with many squared stones, the wreck of once splendid buildings. Not a few fine stones were built into the rough walls at the sides of the track. We had to cross an ancient Roman bridge which spanned the Banias, one of the main sources of the Jordan; but, like everything else, this venerable structure is left to sink into ruin.

Nothing can exceed the romantic beauty of Banias. High hills, clothed with trees and green crops, are mingled with great peaks or masses of naked rock and long stretches of sunny valleys glorious with verdure, especially that of the Banias. Our camp was pitched in a great olive plantation above the village, near to the famous sanctuary of Pan, beside the cavern from which the Banias rushes forth. News of our arrival seemed to spread at once, children gathering round the tents to watch the ways of the foreigners, and groups of women soon following, to see if they could be healed of their ailments, or procure any help for those of their husbands or children. Some of these mothers and daughters of Cæsarea Philippi were very fine-looking, and all were clean, and very modestly dressed. It carried one back to the days of the Great Physician, for sufferers from dropsy, ague, blindness, tumours, swellings, and other calamities, thronged to get relief, if possible, from the Hakîm who was for the time in their midst. My medical friend did what he could, and I contributed whatever my small stock afforded in the way of medicines, but we could do very little. It seems beyond question, however, that a Christian physician who would travel round the land from time to time, for the benefit of the people, now without any professional aid, would have a far better opportunity of speaking for the Master than any other missionary. The Edinburgh Medical Mission has admirable men at different parts of the Holy Land, and in Damascus; perhaps it might be arranged that they should undertake such circuits. Indeed, they may, for anything I know, already make them, for they are full of zeal as well as of intelligence.

After a short rest I strolled to the cavern fountain. What a voice of many waters in this lovely scene! What a fulness and variety of vegetation! The view as we went

down the slope to the cave was beautiful; that from the bottom of the glen, if possible, still more so. At the foot of an upright wall of rock a stream of silver-clear water burst forth in the cave, from under heaps of stone which, in the course of ages, had fallen from the cliff and from the roof of the cavern itself, earthquakes having probably aided the accumulation. Thick-branching vegetation hung over the banks of the infant river. A two-storey house stood picturesquely on the east side, amidst oaks and olives, hiding Banias from view at this point. Little islands rose in the midst of the stream, like great baskets of flowers, kept in perpetual glory by the rushing waters that flowed round them. To the south-west a chain of hills shut out the distance, and to the east the prospect was still more circumscribed, but to the north rose the great castle of Banias, far up in the sky, perched on a hill almost surrounded by a deep valley. The cliff over the cave from which the river issues is about 100 feet high, and still exhibits ancient sculptures, now little above the mounds of broken rock below, but once, perhaps, far from the ground. They consist of three niches, as if for the statues of divinities, and two of them have Greek inscriptions. Memorials of the temple built here by Herod in honour of his brother Philip, tetrarch of Trachonitis, would naturally be associated with this cave, since it had been for ages a sacred spot as the birth-place of a river—if, indeed, the heaps of stone around be not in part the remains of the sanctuary itself. To Herod was due the name Cæsarea Philippi, by which the place is known in the New Testament.[1]

There are few antiquities in Banias, but the whole region is so beautiful that nature itself is an all-powerful attraction. The park-like scenery on the way from Dan,

[1] Matt. xvi. 13; Mark viii. 27.

oak-scrub and trees of larger growth beautifying the hills and valleys, the luxuriant vegetation round the town as one approaches it, the rushing waters, falling in cascades and winding through thickets and overhanging vines, and the wealth of small streams flowing in every direction, are charms of which one cannot weary. The ancient Banias was naturally fortified on three sides by the river and a deep valley, while on the fourth there was a strong wall, with three great towers, and a broad, deep ditch, probably flooded with water when necessary. A large square tower defended the bridge; buildings with fine granite columns—some of which are still lying about—rose in the town, and an aqueduct ran through it; nor can we doubt that then, as now, streams were led through artificial beds to drive the town mills. Such was the place when our Lord saw it, for it was on one of the green hills around that He was transfigured, when He had retired from Galilee to Cæsarea Philippi and its neighbourhood to escape the wiles of "the Fox" Antipas. Here doubtless, as elsewhere, He not only taught the people, but healed their diseases. Indeed, at the time of Eusebius, there was a legend that the house of the woman cured of an issue of blood[1] was still to be seen in the town, and a statue was shown which was thought to commemorate the event; the woman, it was believed, having been an inhabitant of Cæsarea Philippi. "At the gate of her house, on an elevated stone, stands a brazen image of a woman on her knees, with her hands stretched out before her, like one entreating. Opposite this is another image, of a man, erect, of the same material, decently clad in a mantle, and stretching out his hand to the woman. This, they say, is a statue of Christ, and it has remained even to our times, so that I myself saw it when I was

[1] Luke viii. 43.

in the city."[1] It seems very improbable, however, that such a work of art should have been set up by a Jewess, as the woman apparently was, for images of all kinds, and even portraits, were abhorrent to the Jews, a fact which at once shows the worthlessness of all pretended likenesses of our Lord.

That the Transfiguration took place near Banias, and not on Mount Tabor, seems beyond question. As to Tabor, indeed, its broad top was enclosed with the walls of a fortification, and built over, to a large extent, in Christ's day—Josephus, when he says he built a castle and walls upon it, meaning only that he restored them. But which of the hills around Cæsarea Philippi witnessed the revelation of our Lord's glory is quite unknown. Nor can we tell in which of the green glades the grand confession was made by which St. Peter boldly acknowledged Him as "the Christ, the Son of the living God:" the first public declaration He openly accepted of His being the true Messiah; the inauguration, in fact, of the new spiritual society He had come to establish.

Heathen temples were very common in Palestine in Christ's day, and hence that of Pan at Cæsarea Philippi would be no novelty to Him. Already, in the time of Antiochus the Great, the district was spoken of as sacred to Pan, and the likeness of the god, playing on the flute, is still to be seen on local coins of the Roman period. All over this part of the country, indeed, the remains of temples abound, and yet Christ found that quiet and safety in this largely heathen district which were denied Him among His own people.

The castle which looks down on all this loveliness is reached by a long and steep ride. Who first raised a fortress on this proud summit no one knows. Its

[1] Euseb. *Hist. Ecc.*, vi. 18.

walls are built of great drafted stones, put together with much skill, but the draft in this case seems not to be a sure sign of antiquity, as the Palestine Surveyors, whom one would think the best possible judges, believe the fortifications to be the work of the Crusaders. They tower nearly 1,500 feet above the town, and extend for no less than 1,450 feet from east to west—very nearly a third of a mile: their depth from north to south being on an average 360 feet. At the back and front, deep valleys defend them; on the west, they are protected by a rock-cut ditch; and on the east, by which alone they are approachable, access is still difficult, as the rocks rise steeply from the narrow ridge to the castle walls.

The interior is an uneven area of four or five acres; the rock swelling up in some parts above the walls, while in others the ground is ploughed and sown. There is, indeed, a small village within the fortifications, depending for water wholly on the vast cisterns of the ancient structure, which supplied water to it in antiquity. Some of the stones of the walls are from six to eight feet in length, beautifully dressed, and bevelled; one round tower, with fine sloping work below, offering a surface not less finished and striking than that of the so-called Tower of David, at Jerusalem. Under your feet are many subterranean vaults, chambers, and passages, to which access is obtained by a stairway cut in the rock, but no one can now explore the choked-up wonders of this lower world. Who can realise the energy which dragged to such a spot vast mountains of building material; or quarried out the huge trenches in the rocks, and hollowed the very hill, over acres, into an underground labyrinth of dungeons, storehouses, immense cisterns, and much else? It helps to remove false ideas of the condition of the country in remote ages to see such triumphs of science, industry, and wealth in a sequestered

spot like Banias. Assuming that the Crusaders only adapted or enlarged already existing works, there is nothing at all equal to this castle in Western lands, except of a date which is comparatively modern.

The position of this wonderful fortress shows that it could not have been intended for the defence of Banias, for it is more than two miles away. Not improbably it was built even before the town, though that boasts of a high antiquity. Like the castle of Kulat esh Shukif—the Belfort of the Crusaders—which towers in full view in the distance, it was raised to command the great caravan-route from Lake Merom to the Plain of Damascus; perhaps by the Sidonians, in the remote days when they had settlements in these parts.

After the death of Christ, Cæsarea Philippi, re-named Neronias by Herod Agrippa II., saw strange sights. When Jerusalem had fallen, Titus celebrated his triumph here by public games, in which Jewish prisoners were compelled to fight with wild beasts and with each other. During the Crusades, it was repeatedly taken and retaken, but finally came into the hands of the Saracens in 1165. A gateway alone now remains in any tolerable preservation, to attest the strength of the defences of the town. Its walls, over six feet thick, rise beside the bridge which spans the channel of the Jordan in one arch of huge stones. Below, the waters rush on over a wide confusion of rocks, mostly basalt: picturesque but wild. Into the streets, which are mere lanes, the stones of generations of houses, and from a wide extent of fields, have been allowed to fall, or have been thrown.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE LEBANON MOUNTAINS.

From Banias we set out for Damascus, the road leading up long slopes, in many places very stony, with basalt cliffs breaking out at one place, ploughed land at another, and smooth rock at a third. Brooks of delightful sound ran down the hill-sides. Clumps of myrtles were not infrequent, and at some places terraces had been built along the sides to retain the soil. A few olives were to be seen now and then, and the great hill on which the castle stands was covered with them to the very top. Industry is a characteristic of the peasant in the Holy Land, and the Druses are no exception to the rule, so that I was not astonished to find, as the path still mounted from height to height, patches of green wheat, beans, or lentils, wherever the rock permitted. Jebel esh Sheikh, or Hermon, did not look so high as we were ascending it; and the snow, which at a distance had appeared an unbroken mantle, was now seen only to fill the hollows of the summit, with bare ribs of the mountain between. It was another instance of distance lending enchantment to the view. The vast mountain mass, which had risen so grandly to the heavens ever since we left Samaria, was in fact, when seen even at this distance, only a long awful slope of rock, up to the highest point. There was no peak, but simply a great ridge, bare and terrible, rising a little higher at one part than at another, with Druse

villages far up the valleys. Our path lay down steep slopes, along valleys, up rough ascents.

The Druses, who number about 80,000 souls, are largely descended from the old inhabitants of Ituræa, though they have adopted the Arabic tongue, through the influence of the Mahommedan conquest. In their social constitution they form a kind of republic, with a chosen leader, at times, as the first among equals. Their religion is kept profoundly secret among themselves, but appears to be a mixture of Mahommedan and Christian ideas, with some remains of the old nature-worship of ancient Syria. The whole population is divided into two classes—the Initiated and the Ignorant: the two sections forming distinct castes, of which the former is the dominant. There are no priests, but there are houses devoted to prayer and meditation; the repositories of their sacred writings and standards. Among themselves they are known as "Confessors of the Unity of God," laying great stress on their lofty and pure conception of the Almighty. Incarnations have, in their belief, often taken place: the last of them having vanished from the earth in the person of the Khalif Hakîm, in A.D. 1021. He has left the earth to put their faith to the proof, but he will return again, with power and great glory, and give his servants the empire of the world. With each incarnation of God there has always been that of the first of the Divine creations—Supreme Wisdom, which last manifested itself as Hamza, the son of Ali, the Apostle of the Unity of God. Only a certain number of human beings are created; souls passing, at death, into a new body, so that they are always wandering, though steadily rising to perfection if devoted to the truth, or growing worse if given to sin. In late years, the worst characteristics of the Druses have been most prominently before the world, from their terrific massacres of

the Lebanon Christians, in 1860, for seeking to cast off the Druse yoke, to which they had till then submitted; since then, these strange people have been peaceful.[1]

The wild path kept on, up and down, across the beds of torrents, now of course dry; the top of Hermon reaching along, mile after mile; with snow, now, only on the slightly higher end. At ten in the forenoon the air was deliciously soft and mild. Good wide fields of strong wheat were frequent on our right, up the gentle slope of a wide valley; on the left, the great summit-ridge stretched skyward, in awful desolation. Still up, up, up, under the frowning black slope. The track was over grey limestone, but so rough that I wondered how the horse could pick its steps, or I write my notes. After a time great herds of black and red cattle appeared, quietly browsing along the south side of the mighty roof of the mountains, a very short distance below the snow; the ridge stretching on and on like that of a stupendous house, and slowly rising to the north. On that side of us the steep rose in desolate sublimity, though here and there a faint embroidery of green gleamed out amidst the rocks, while the southern ascent was more or less green nearly to the top. By-and-by a great ridge of sandstone rose on the one side, and just under the snow on the top of the chain was a rounded hill, beautiful with green corn. Then came a Druse village, of flat-roofed stone houses of one storey, rising pleasantly up the slope; the top of the mountain towering aloft 1,500 feet higher.

At eleven in the forenoon we had been three hours climbing, but the air was still delightful, and great flocks of sheep and goats fed on better pasture than is common

[1] Some think the Druses partly Persian, and that their customs connect them with Media and Turkestan. It may be that they are not more republican than other Orientals, although high authorities speak of them as being so.

thousands of feet below. Two Druses tended a flock, one of them carrying a gun, to protect his charge from the wild beasts of the mountains. The snowy top was soon just above us, to the north, perhaps 800 feet higher than our rough track. The air grew perceptibly cooler as we got nearer the snow of the hills, but it did not prevent life of all kinds from enjoying itself, for there was a whole chorus of crested larks as we rode on. We had now reached the highest point of the pass, and from this point the mountains changed their character. The onward track lay across the wide crater of an ancient volcano, filled up with lava, and strewn thickly with it in masses, in the form of basalt, but even here, cleared and fenced patches, bright with grain, were not infrequent. A man and a camel which he rode were the only creatures that passed us as, after crossing the wide stretch of lava, we rode over a nice little sandy plain, with good grazing. Two oak-trees relieved the monotony around, and then came a large flock of sheep and goats, with a herd of sixteen horses, quietly grazing. Basalt showed itself in many places, but the limestone heights through which it had once burst up in molten fire rose like a fence round it on all sides, more or less far off; the strata so undisturbed that I almost fancied they had been deposited after the basalt eruption, instead of before it. All over the little plain, "gowans," so dear to our North-country brethren, whitened the ground, though snow lay on many spots around us.

We were now under the very top of Hermon—"the Lofty Height"—famous in Scripture; known as Jebel esh Sheikh—"the Mountain of the White-haired Old Man"—among the populations of to-day. From the earliest times, the summit rising a little above us had been familiar, as the everywhere visible northern boundary of Palestine;[1]

[1] Deut. iii. 8; iv. 48; Josh. xi. 17; xii. 1; 1 Chron. vi. 23.

originally assigned to the kingdom of Og, and then to the territory of Manasseh.[1] The Sidonians knew it as Sirion, the Amorites as Senir[2]—both meaning "the Banner;" a fitting name for the great white standard it raises aloft over the whole land. The mass of its gigantic bulk is of the age of the Middle Chalk, as shown both by the prevailing rock and by its fossil fish and shells, some of which I myself got, thousands of feet above the sea-level. But it has been rent asunder by terrible volcanic eruptions, as we were soon to see even more fully than on the ascent. On the southern point of the summit there are ruins, apparently of an ancient temple, but the whole mountain was once girdled with sanctuaries, for Hermon was a great centre of the worship of Baal. Snow covers the top for the greater part of the year, and in ancient times supplied ice during summer for cooling the drinks of the people of Tyre. Indeed, the Hebrews also perhaps availed themselves of this luxury, if we may judge from the proverb: "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him; for he refresheth the soul of his masters."[3] They could not get snow in the hot months, except from Hermon.

We rested for refreshment upon this highest plateau, with a limestone block for a support to our backs, and snow within six feet. Some Druse shepherds presently made their appearance and lay down beside us. One had a double-barrelled gun for the wolves; another an ugly brass-sheathed knife in his girdle. Some children were with them; one, a little girl in a "tarboosh," with her hair divided into six plaits down her back; plaited additions in red hanging still lower from each. A blue cotton wrapper and a coloured sash completed her costume.

[1] Josh. xii. 5; xiii. 11. [2] Deut. iii. 9; Ps. xxix. 6; Ezek. xxvii. 5.
[3] Prov. xxv. 13.

The descent towards Damascus was long and wearisome. No desolation, indeed, could be more extreme than that of the first few miles. Fire-deluges had swept down the mountain, wave on wave, leaving universal black ruin. Fences which enclosed nothing were piled up of fragments of basalt; their breadth as great as their height. With wonderful industry, the loose volcanic cinders and broken lava had, in places, been gathered off the surface to allow spots to be tilled, but they were as nothing in the far-stretching waste. Where we were descending, the congealed lava-currents wrinkled the whole face of the mountain into the roughest of steps. These, moreover, were made still rougher by being strewn over with tens of thousands of tons of lava-boulders, shot out, I suppose, in a frightful skyward cannonade from the central fires. The black wavy sea of lava under-foot is bedded with them, over an immense space. The track lay through this hideous ruin of nature, lifeless and terrible as when the sides of the mountain were cased in glowing fire. It is the regular road to and from Damascus, as we soon found by meeting a train of twenty mules, laden with boxes of tobacco and bales of cloth, on their way from that city to Jerusalem.

The view as we descended was magnificent; range beyond range of hills stretching away to the south—the hills of Ituræa and Gilead. At last the mountains were behind us, or on the north, and open land, with rushing streams, once more cheered the way to Kefr Howar, our quarters for the night. Even before we reached our halting-place, however, rain began to fall, and continued at intervals; but the tent was, of course, a great protection, though by no means watertight. I have a vivid remembrance of that night, for it was largely spent in trying to balance the coverlet on a bed two inches

broader than my shoulders; to keep my feet from exposure at the one end of the structure, and to forget a sweet hollow in the middle, which left one's back for quite a space suspended over nothing. Then there was the amusement of trying to set the howls of jackals and the barking of numerous dogs to music, and of watching the flapping of the canvas as the rainy wind made sport with it. Sleep, however, came at last, but I was soon roused by a pious jackass braying its morning hymn close to my ear.

The pass by which I had crossed the mountains must have been in use from the earliest times, and was most probably that by which Chedorlaomer and his allies fled, when pursued from Dan to Damascus by Abraham. Over such a road the rout must have been terrible, for any attempt at order would be impossible, and it was equally hopeless to carry off any plunder. Did St. Paul, also, cross by it on his memorable journey to the Syrian capital? It is more than probable that he did.

Only the Mahommedans, I may here remark, seem to engage openly in prayer in Palestine, though some even of them are not too devout. I never saw any of the men who were with us praying, nor any of the country people, though it is very common to see men at their devotions in towns, where Mahommedanism is more scrupulously honoured. The rigid formalities observed on such occasions are curious. The hands are first raised, open, till the thumbs touch the ears, the words, "God is great," accompanying the elevation. A few petitions having been recited mentally, the hands are lowered and folded over the body, while the first chapter of the Koran, and a few other brief passages from the same source, are being recited by the supplicant. He next bends forward, with his hands on his knees, and again repeats, three times,

"God is great." Then, once more, he stands erect and repeats the same words. Presently he falls on his knees, bending forward till his face touches the ground, with his hands on each side of the head, repeating this prostration thrice; all the time reciting the appointed short prayers. Once more he kneels, and after settling back on his heels, continues a prescribed series of brief supplications. This ends the required devotions, but the whole is often gone over more than once, where there is special fervour.[1]

It is curious, however, to find that this striking religionism is in very many cases entirely independent of any really devout feeling, for even Moslems have their proverbs about those who are extra zealous in public prayers, and it is certain that men who have no idea of common morality in their daily life are as exact as Pharisees in their compliance with the ceremonial requirements of their faith. To pray standing in the synagogues, or at the corners of the streets, may not always be a mark of insincerity, and, indeed, must not be regarded thus harshly; but, on the other hand, it by no means implies the sanctity one might expect. The great stress laid by Mahommedanism on the exact observance of the prescribed ritual in religious acts is hardly realised in the Western world. Nothing can make up for a ceremonial error; ardent faith or the purest intentions are entirely neutralised, if any detail be amiss in the required formalities. There is a right way and a wrong in any religious observance, and there is no choice in the matter, nor is any detail indifferent, however small. The rules respecting efficacious prayer are an example of this. Mahomet's directions, which must be implicitly followed, enjoin that "when anyone says his prayers, he *must* have something

[1] See Vol. I., p. 203 ff.

in front of him, and if he cannot find anything for that purpose, he must put his walking-stick into the ground. If, however, the ground be hard, he must place it lengthways before him. If he have no staff, he must draw a line on the ground, and after doing this there will be no injury to his prayers from anyone passing before him." To pass in front of a man when he is praying is a terrible offence, since it goes far to spoil the good of his prayers: a result so dreadful that the Prophet empowered a believer who might be annoyed in this way to "draw his sword" upon the criminal and "cut him down," and further declared that "if anyone did but know the sin of passing before a person engaged in prayer, he would find it better for him to sink into the earth."

No less important is the manner of carrying out the ablutions required before prayer. When the Prophet performed these offices, "he took a handful of water, and raised it to the under part of his chin, and combed his beard with his hand, and said, 'In this way has my Lord ordered me.'" On one occasion, moreover, when some of his followers, who were performing their ablutions in a hurry, had omitted to wet the soles of their feet, the Prophet said, "Alas for the soles of their feet, for they will be in hell fire!" Sin, in fact, according to Mahomet, is a material pollution, capable of being washed away, like so much physical uncleanness. Hence he ordered his followers in making their ablutions to be careful not to leave even a finger-nail unwetted, for, said he, "He who makes ablution thoroughly will cleanse away the faults from his body, even to those that may hide under his finger-nails," and will, as the result, be known on the day of Resurrection by "his bright hands and feet," the effect of his diligent and frequent purifications. The positions in prayer, which I have described, are no less important.

"To rest on the arms while at prayer is pleasing to the people of hell," and so also are "hurried prostration, like a cock pecking grain," and "spreading the arms like dogs and tigers." The attitudes of Mahomet, handed down by tradition, are therefore the safest rule, and are rigorously observed. "The Prophet," says the authoritative account of his devotions—handed down, it is told us, from Ayesha, one of his favourite wives—"used to begin his prayers by repeating the Tacbir and reading the Koran, with these words, 'Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds!' And when he made the bending of the body he did not raise the head, nor yet bend it very low, but kept it in a middle position, with his neck and back in a line. And when he had raised his head, after bending, he did not prostrate himself till he had stood quite erect, and after each prostration he sat for an interval, before standing up. He used also to lay his left leg down, and his right leg he kept up, and he forbade resting both arms on the ground, and finished his prayers with the *salaam*." How different this mechanical devotion from that of the New Testament, which says not a word about posture or gesture, but confines itself to the requirement that, to be accepted, all prayer must be offered "in spirit and in truth."[1]

The power of Mahommedanism as a creed is very great—partly, no doubt, from the penalties of abandoning it; but still more, I fear, from the proud self-righteousness of its votaries. Conversions to Christianity are very rare, the excellent American missionaries in Cairo telling me that the only influence they could exert was to temper Mahommedanism in some homes with the purer spirit of the New Testament, taught in the schools to the children or women. The vast pilgrimages each year to Mecca and Medina, from all parts of the Moslem world, show the

[1] John iv. 23.

vigour of this faith, since they imply a universal zeal among the Mahommedan nations; the actual pilgrims being only those who are able to accomplish what is the highest ambition of all. Over a million pounds sterling, it is estimated, is spent on this annual journey to the great shrines, though the bulk of the pilgrims are of the poorer classes—which means more in the East than anywhere else. In 1885, 53,000 persons entered Mecca to pay their devotions at the Kaaba, or sacred stone, half of them Turks and Egyptians, the rest made up of over 16,000 Malays and natives of India, over 7,000 Moors, about 6,000 Arabs from all parts of Africa and Arabia, and 1,600 Persians. Imagine the influence of this number, returning, each year, ablaze with pride and fanaticism, to their homes. How fierce and intolerant must they make their less privileged fellow-believers around! It cannot fail, in fact, to have the same effect as that which we know the annual pilgrimage to the Passover at Jerusalem had on ancient Judaism, kindling it, both in Palestine and elsewhere, to a bigotry which looked down with contempt on all other creeds. We can understand, moreover, from the financial interests involved in the Mahommedan pilgrimage—its members spending, as I have said, a million pounds on their route and in Mecca—how keenly the local bigotry, like that of Jerusalem, must be seconded by lower passions, in resisting all religious change. Now, as of old, orthodoxy finds an all-powerful ally in the pocket.

The dress of the people in Lebanon and towards Damascus is different from that of Palestine, jackets and baggy trousers taking the place of "abbas" and blue cotton gaberdines. Among the peasants and Bedouins the shirt is, in many cases, the one article of dress. Drawers of cotton are also worn by some of the better class, occasionally very full, in other cases like our own. The baggy

breeches are a phenomenon to Western eyes, especially in their simplicity, for they are only a huge circle of cotton or cloth, tied round the waist by a sash or cord. Where outer jackets are worn, as in Lebanon, there is frequently an inner waistcoat, glorious with many small buttons, and coming close up to the neck; but sometimes there is an inner jacket under the "abba," with pockets, as in Europe. In the towns not a few persons in good position wear a long open gown of cotton or silk, folding over in front, and secured round the body by a girdle, which latter may be of leather, cotton, silk, camels'-hair, or simply a shawl, according to the means and taste of the wearer. Even in the East, however, there are fashions. Some affect a gaudy jacket over the long silken or cotton gown, and this may be either a simple affair, or a triumph of tailoring, with sleeves finely slashed, or fastened to the shoulders by buttons, rich embroidery playing a grand part in specially splendid garments. Of the "abba" I have often spoken, but besides this a long loose cloak of white wool, with a hood for the head, is worn by a few.

How far these varieties of dress resemble any in the Bible is not easy to say. In the time of the patriarchs, homespun cloth of wool, or goats'-hair,[1] was in use, and flax and linen became known to the Hebrews in Egypt,[2] though it is hardly to be doubted that intercourse with the Nile had much earlier caused their use in the encampments of Abraham and his descendants. In later times the Jews gloried in white, parti-coloured purple, red, or scarlet clothes, of wool, linen, and cotton,[3] in some cases enriched by an interweaving of gold threads.[4]

[1] Gen. xxxi. 19; xxxviii. 12.

[2] Exod. ix. 31; xxviii. 42.

[3] Judg. v. 30; 2 Sam. i. 24; Jer. iv. 30; Ezek. xxiii. 6; Nah. ii. 3; Luke xvi. 19.

[4] Ps. xl. 10—14; 1 Macc. vi. 2.

David's ephod, in which he danced before the ark, appears to have been a long, shirt-like garment, similar to that so common among the poor at this time,[1] a girdle binding it round the waist.[2] Over this an "abba" was worn on going out of doors, and this latter was the covering of the wearer at night.[3] But this simple dress gave place, among the rich, to as many varieties of costume as we see to-day. Human vanity is much the same in all ages, and as strong among not a few of the one sex as it admittedly is in most of the other. Dives had his purple and fine linen, and Jacob was only human when he dressed his favourite son in a long robe, instead of the short peasant's smock worn by his brethren; for the robe known as that of many colours seems to have been peculiar rather from its length than from its gay appearance.[4] The Hebrew ladies, indeed, seem to have been as fond of dress as any of their modern sisters, to judge from Isaiah's catalogue of the different parts of their wardrobe and from their jewel-cases: the ankle-chains, the golden discs and crescents for the hair, the forehead, and the neck; the ear-rings, arm-chains, and fine veils; the coronets, stepping-chains, and costly girdles; the scent-bottles and amulets; the finger and nose rings; the gala dresses and costly mantles; the cloaks and purses; the hand-mirrors and fine linen under-clothes; the turbans and large veils.[5] It would be hard to match this inventory anywhere in Palestine now.

The houses of Kefr Howar, our camping-place, were poor, but a wonderful improvement on those of Palestine, while a large cattle-barn behind our tents was a really excellent stone building, two storeys high and of great

[1] 2 Sam. vi. 14—20.
[2] 2 Kings i. 8; Matt. iii. 4; Jer. xiii. 1.
[3] Deut. xxiv. 13; Luke xxiii. 11; John xix. 2.
[4] Gen. xxxvii. 3.
[5] Isa. iii. 18—24. See Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, iv. 302.

size, with an arch in the centre for passage to the back. One of the stones, set at the inner corner of the archway, had a long Greek inscription; so constantly does the remote past assert itself in these historic lands. I tried to take a "squeeze" of it, but, being a novice at the work, failed in a triumphant degree, though, as a German scholar was collecting all the inscriptions to be found in the neighbourhood, this was not much to be regretted.

The road to Damascus is a slow and pleasant, indeed often imperceptible, descent through a country which, with ordinary government, would be wonderfully rich. For many miles on the west of the great city the landscape sinks into a plain, sometimes stony, but more commonly fine arable soil. Villages are very scarce, and there are few trees; yet the view was always delightful, for the high mountains of the Lebanon chain bounded the horizon on the north, and others rose at different points in other directions. We were travelling, in all probability, along the very same road—a mere track, which industry had never attempted to improve—over which Abraham and his tribe, with their mighty herds and flocks, had wandered towards Palestine four thousand years before, and along which Jacob, staff in hand, had plodded towards Haran.[1] Things must have been much the same around them as around us, except that the population and wealth of the district were probably far greater then than now, for Damascus is one of the oldest cities in the world. To the south rise the volcanic hills of the Lejja, a strange region, where lava has crystallised in a great triangular plateau, wrinkled and cracked into innumerable fissures as it cooled. In the days of our Lord it was part of the Tetrarchy of Philip, son of Herod the Great. The length of this extraordi-

[1] Gen. xii. 6; xxix. 1.

nary region is about twenty-two miles, from north to south, and fourteen across; the whole space being simply a chaos of basaltic rocks and boulders, crossed by fissures and crevices in every direction. The bubbles on the surface of the once liquid fire-stream still show themselves by the hollows left when they burst, and the top is roughened into low waves, marking its slow heavings under the wind before it finally congealed.

Strange to say, this forbidding tract is thickly studded with the remains of deserted towns and villages, built solidly of blocks of lava, and dating from early Christian times. No proof could be more striking of the insecurity of life and property in the last centuries of Rome, since nothing but desire of safety can be conceived as the reason for such a place being peopled. At the time of the Hebrew invasion it was part of the territory of Og, and must have been almost impregnable. The fierce energy of the invaders, however, still in its early enthusiasm, carried all before it. But the district did not fall in the first campaign. The glory of its final conquest is ascribed to Jair, the head of a clan of the tribe Manasseh, who lived at a later time:[1] a mighty chieftain boasting of thirty sons—no small honour among Orientals—each riding as a chief on his own white ass; and the whole thirty finally ruling over various towns or villages taken by their father.[2] It had been a haunt of robbers for ages before Christ, but its rough population was at last bridled by the energy and genius of Herod the Great. This strange plateau is on the average about twenty feet above the plain around it, black promontories of basalt running out from it, here and there, like buttresses, though the whole stands up, sharp and distinct, amid the fertility on every side. At some places where the fissures are wide, the lava has

[1] Deut. iii. 13; Josh. xiii. 30. [2] Judg. x. 3—5.

crumbled into rich soil, which is still cultivated; but though there are many points on the upper surface from which the whole lava-sea is under view, it is impossible to cross it, so innumerable are the cracks and yawning rifts. Strange to say, there are not a few springs in this wild district, so that water is not deficient. The Romans, after Herod, held it with a firm hand, cutting a road through it, and stationing a garrison in one of its strongholds; thus subduing it so thoroughly that temples built by them, amidst what is now so strange a desolation, are still standing in fine preservation.

Half-way to Damascus, on the left hand, at the foot of the mountains, some miles off, lay the great village of Katana, surrounded with orchards and gardens, full of all kinds of fruit-trees, especially walnuts. The minarets of the great city soon glittered before us in the distance, but they proved still a very long way off: the clear air deceiving us as to their proximity. Only near villages were there any signs of the richness of the greatly-extolled plains which we were now traversing; but round them was a fulness of verdure which quite hid the yellow-washed houses. Signs of approaching a large city appeared as we rode on: the carriage of some rich person passed us, and also some hired carriages, with nondescript drivers, carrying their fares to their destinations. Mezzeh, a village outside Damascus, is virtually the commencement of the city, and a pleasant place it is, with vineyards, groves of olives, and clumps of fruit-trees of many kinds. The fields were irrigated by a canal from the river Barada, to which Damascus and the neighbourhood owe their charms, and indeed their fitness for human habitation, for without this stream there could be only sterility. The sun shone from an unclouded heaven as we rode on, always at a walk, towards the city, over the same road,

in all probability, as that along which the persecuting Saul was hurrying with his attendants when, on a day as bright as this, the Splendour of God, outshining even the noon, dazzled him to blindness, so that he fell to the ground, and heard the words "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"[1] Every feature of the surrounding landscape stood out in sharp distinctness—hills, bowers of green, towers, buildings, and houses, while on each side of the road, inside roughly-plastered walls which are no credit to the Damascus masons, great lines of fruit-trees stretched away in green perspective, with the slow waters of irrigating canals glittering underneath. In the west, behind us, rose the majestic Hermon, its blinding white crown reaching far up into the cloudless azure.

[1] Acts ix. 4.

CHAPTER L.

DAMASCUS.

Damascus lies hidden till the last behind a very wood of fruit-trees, interspersed with gardens—walnuts, apricots, figs, olives, pomegranates, apples, pears, cherries, and peaches mingling in rich confusion. The girdle of verdure round the city is about three miles in breadth, and deserves all the praise it has received as a magnificent display of the bounty of nature. Here, you come on an apparently endless grove of apricots. Yonder, on the banks of an irrigation canal, are long rows of poplars, which wave gently in the soft air. Further on is a thicket of every kind of fruit-tree, and, between, are patches of grain, tobacco, or vegetables. There is a small stream to cross almost every hundred yards. An alley of high walnut-trees, in blossom, lined the road for a great way, and, as might be expected in such a paradise of green, birds of all kinds are said to make music.

It is hard to realise the impression which such a glory of flower, and shrub, and tree must make on the weary caravan bands who arrive from Bagdad or Mecca, after their eyes have for weeks or months been tired with the monotonous tawny sand-waves of the desert or the scorched peaks of bare hills, as desolate as the sands around them; and when for weeks together they have been stinted for water in the burning heat. We must put ourselves in the place of those who have had

such experiences to understand how naturally, and with what full sincerity, the apparently hyperbolical praises of Damascus have been given. To them it is, indeed, "the pearl of the East," "glorious as Eden," "fragrant as Paradise," "the plumage of the peacock," "the lustre on the neck of doves." Yet, compared with the environs of many European or American cities, those of Damascus would be thought hardly deserving such ecstatic praise. For, if nature be rich, art is wanting. There is no beauty except that which springs from the soil; no trim walls or fine houses; no general neatness. Nature has done much; man nothing. Disorder, semi-barbarism, and roughness mark universal neglect. Indeed, this is the characteristic of the whole city, for however splendid the interior of some houses may be, the outside is, apparently in every case, very humble, and generally in disrepair, probably from a desire to avert the cupidity of caimacans or pashas.

Troops of camels from Bagdad, with loads of tobacco and dates, lay outside the houses, which are finally approached by the road from Damascus to Beirout, made by a French company, and actually like a Western highway: a wonderful fact in Syria. Meadows sloped down, on the left, to the river, which flowed in a slow smooth stream, like a broad canal; flocks, horses, and cattle on this side; a promenade for the citizens on the other. Then came a hospice for pilgrims, built by Sultan Selim I. in 1516, covering a great space: a low building, the roof of which is a mass of small domes, with arches beneath; two slender minarets, with their balcony aloft for the muezzin when he calls to prayer, rising on one side. After a time, when we had crossed the river by a bridge, the scene was varied by open-air cafés, which were no more than an array of low stools set out in the shade of trees. The

omnipresent water-carrier passed with his huge jar, or leather bottle, and brass cup, inviting you to purchase; men at the roadside sat behind a round table-head laid over a basket, displaying stores of thin "scones," made tasty with butter and grape-syrup, and sprinkled with sesame-seed, inviting customers now and again with the cry, "God is the Nourisher; buy my bread!" Ladies, veiled or unveiled, with Western parasols, rode by on asses, a bell or thick tassel hanging at the animal's neck, and the donkey-boy, stick in hand, at its heels; gossips sat in crowds, smoking water-pipes in the leafy shade; beggars, cross-legged, turbaned, and picturesque, squatted by the wayside, asking alms; passengers of both sexes, bent on many errands of business or pleasure, rode or walked, until finally we halted at the Victoria Hotel, close to the open space used as a horse-market: a two-storeyed house, with large, marble-paved rooms; the Barada flowing before the doors, between stone walls.

It is not too much to say that Damascus is the meanest-looking city I ever saw, as it shows itself from the streets. Day after day you hope to come on something respectable, but learn, to your surprise, that the humble, dilapidated streets, or dark, dirty bazaars, through which you have wandered, include the best parts of the place. Mud is the chief material of the houses, though stone could easily be obtained from the neighbouring mountains. Some houses, and the mosques, are, indeed, of stone; but the bulk of the city can boast no prouder material than the sun-dried brick—that is, mud—of which the old city walls are built. Hence, though it is asserted that there are 500 mansions that may be called palaces, one would never suspect it, in riding through the narrow streets with scarcely any windows, and only low and mean-looking doors; the ground, a bed of dust in dry weather, and a

quagmire after rain. Indeed, so perishable are the buildings generally, that the rains of each winter make great repairs necessary, while in summer they crack and crumble away in the dry heat.

The shops are mere holes at the sides of the streets, or bazaars, open in front, with their wares hung up, or spread out, before all passers-by. There is an old-clothes street which rivals Houndsditch. Saddle-bag shops, with the master and his helpers busy in what should be the window, sewing fresh stock, or mending what has been handed to them to repair; braziers, with a fine display of copper ewers, basins, trays, and bowls, sold by weight, the manufacture going on all the time, merrily, in the open arch or window, where the workmen sit beating and hammering, cross-legged, in turbans or tarbooshes; cooks, engaged in frying, seething, stewing, in the open air, or equally open cave, at a mud table, on the top of which are small holes for charcoal fires; butchers, with necks and legs of goat or mutton, the latter wonderfully small and uninviting—the heads of beasts being conspicuously absent, for no Oriental would eat them on any account; fruit-sellers, with a large but dusty show of the yield of Damascus orchards or vegetable gardens; huge stacks of crockery, neat, but brittle and unglazed; any quantity of bread, which you had better eat without seeing the process of baking; shoes for the pilgrims to Mecca; slippers for use at home or in the streets, and pattens to lift the fair sex above the mud or dust; piles of wheat in wayside granaries, open to the street; carpenters busy with hands and feet, for they steady their work with their toes, as they squat, while busy also with their hands; dyers, with little vats inside the open arch, hard at work at their craft, with hands subdued to the colour they work in; piles of earthenware jars,—succeed

each other in turn. The bazaars are simply great stone-arched lanes, dark enough to make detection of faults in anything purchased lamentably difficult. All trades, moreover, work more or less in the streets, so that the sides of the roads are a varying picture of Eastern industry. Such, no doubt, was Jerusalem in Bible times, including those of our Lord. Many of the streets are roofed over, and they are often not more than eight feet broad; but everywhere is an indescribable air of decay and approaching ruin. In the side streets, the projecting storeys often nearly touch each other; the successive advances on both sides propped up below by rough, thin poles, bent and unsightly, no tool having ever touched them. Straight lines in the projecting walls are not to be found; everything looks as if it had been done by the tenants themselves, in sublime indifference to the perpendicular or the horizontal. Under-foot the condition of things had better not be described. To get into the house of the Presbyterian missionary I had to circumnavigate a sea of horrors which no one in a civilised country could realise.

Yet, inside, the houses approached by such unspeakable filth were at times very fine. One, built by a rich Jew, long dead, had a great room of marble inlaid with countless small mirrors and endless precious stones; the snowy white of the marble showing these off to great effect. The cost of such a chamber must have been immense. Another, which was entered by an old, mean door, full of nails, from a street redolent of something very different from the perfumes of Araby—with high walls on each side, the roughest of pavements, and the poorest of shops—was, itself, delightfully clean. A court paved with marble had in its centre an octagonal fountain, with tiles round it; a lemon-tree rich with fruit rose in one corner; a cypress in

another; and a jessamine clung to the walls. In the hall stood a great carved chest, the wardrobe of the mistress of the family, which she had brought as a bride. At the side, a door, a step up, opened into the divan, or company room, with a stone floor raised another step, and covered with fine mats; a sofa-like seat built along both sides, close to the wall, and adorned with cushions of shawl-patterned stuff, while the back of the room rose still higher, and had similar accommodations. On entering such a chamber visitors take off their shoes or slippers; partly from respect to the host, but still more because prayer may have been said in the room, making it holy ground. The house of the British Consul was much more splendid, though not more Oriental, with the same large court and fountain, but also arcades of marble pillars, inlaid with variegated marbles over the arches, and great marble rooms. Yet here, again, the approach was wretched, and the outside poor.

A huge pile of stones, inside a high wall, but rising above it, lay on my way; it was a cairn raised over the supposed grave of Cain; every one casting a stone on the heap, in execration of the first murderer. In the same way, as I have already said, the Hebrews piled stones over the burial-place of Achan,[1] in the valley of Achor, in the plain of Jericho; and thus they treated the King of Ai.[2] Thus, also, "they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him."[3] So, further, Jeremiah, speaking of his fate, tells us, "they have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me."[4] There are no stately gates at Damascus, as in Cairo or Jerusalem, and even the mud walls of the city exist only in detached portions. Houses

[1] Josh. vii. 26.
[2] Josh. viii. 29.
[3] 2 Sam. xviii. 17.
[4] Lam. iii. 53.

are still built on these, with windows projecting, so as to make it easy for anyone, even now, to escape, as St. Paul did, by being let down in a basket,[1] or as the spies were let down from the walls of Jericho.[2] One window is, indeed, pointed out as that from which St. Paul descended, but the tradition is worthless.

Damascus has been from the earliest ages a chief centre of trade between East and West, and it still connects Bagdad with Constantinople and Cairo, by its numerous caravans. But the discovery of the sea-route to India, by the Cape of Good Hope, gave a serious blow, not only to the commerce of the Italian cities, Venice and Genoa, but also to that of Damascus, which had absorbed most of the trade with farther Asia till this new path to the East was opened. But if the caravans have grown fewer, there has of late years been a proportionately great advance in traffic with the West, by means of the French road opened from Damascus to Beirout. Native industry, once famous for its silks and arms, is now almost driven from the market by European competition. The wares of Manchester, Sheffield, and Birmingham crowd the bazaars; those of Germany and France, also, are well represented. But the decay of the silk and arms manufactures must not be imputed wholly to Western rivalry. When the Tartar prince, Timur, took Damascus, in A.D. 1400, he carried away many thousand silk-weavers and arm-smiths to Samarcand, his capital, just as Nebuchadnezzar did with the best mechanics of all kinds in Jerusalem, in his first deportation of its inhabitants.[3]

As in Cairo, though to a smaller extent, the most motley crowds are to be seen in the streets. Thick-lipped negroes, tattooed Arab women, Bedouins with fiery eyes and tawny beards, Jews with sleepy steps and cowed

[1] Acts ix. 25. [2] Josh. ii. 15. [3] 2 Kings xxiv. 14.

looks, Damascenes in every variety of coloured turban and dress; women with great figured veils covering them all over, making the head look wonderfully like that of a grasshopper or locust; and not a few people with fair hair and blue eyes, natives of I know not what countries—throng past, helping one to imagine how it must have been in ancient Jerusalem, when that city was in its glory. Nothing could be more striking to a traveller from the West than the differences of feature, complexion, and dress. Nearly every religious sect has its own colour of turban—blue, white, red, or green. Mixed with the turbans you see the mortar-like crimson tarboosh, or Turkish cap, with its tassel; the peaked felt headgear of the dervish; the "kefiyeh" of the Arab, with its band of soft camels'-wool rope; the black hat of the Greek clergy, with the rim at the top; and the broad dark wideawake of the European. Rich and poor, in grand array or in humble, on foot or on horse or ass, fill all the streets and bazaars. Here a well-fed Moslem, whose turban shows he has been to Mecca, strides on with slow pride, counting the beads of his rosary as he goes; yonder is a band of thick-veiled women, with coloured "izars" all over them, completely hiding the human shape; their yellow slippers, without heels, the only other articles of dress to be seen. Now, a lean ass, generally very small, patters by, with two or three small, half-naked brown boys astride it; presently, a Bedouin passes by on his horse; he and it equally gay and wild in their trappings. Everywhere the tradesmen and mechanics squat, out of doors or in the middle of their stock—the grocer, for instance, on some elevation inside his open arch, smoking, trading, reading, writing, or gossiping. As in ancient Jerusalem, each trade has its own street or bazaar. The saddle-market has its display of straps, girths, great spade-like stirrup-irons, huge bits, silver-

embroidered pistol-holsters, and gay saddles with peaks before and behind; the coppersmiths hammer their wares into shape in a quarter of their own, some of their great trays measuring nearly six feet across; the second-hand dealers flourish in a market given up to them, offering everything one can imagine, like our marine stores; the Greek bazaar is devoted to sellers of weapons, shawls, carpets, clothing, and antiquities of which most were made yesterday; the street of the tailors is filled with busy knights of the needle, who display in their shops, or, rather, windowless holes, not only Eastern but European clothing, velvet caps, fezzes, white linen skull-caps, and brightly-dyed Persian and European stockings. The water-pipe sellers also have a street to themselves; some of their pipes rude enough, others gaily decorated on the long flexible tube, and mounted with gold or silver wire. A long row of stalls is sacred to the drapers; another row to the booksellers, a very bigoted set, too proud, in many cases, even to answer an unbeliever who may ask them a question as to their stock; and, not to mention others, there is the cloth bazaar, where all the materials of outside dress can be had in endless variety. There are no counters, anywhere, nor does any customer enter the shop. The dealer sits in wait for him, reading his Koran till he appear, or smoking a water-pipe hired from some street-purveyor of such articles, or repeating his prayers, or gossiping with his neighbour, turning with sublime slowness and condescension to anyone who stops to examine his goods, but never, or very rarely, rising.

The cabinet-makers struck me as peculiarly skilful in their art. Chests, tables, and the pattens used at Damascus, finely inlaid with mother-of-pearl, lay temptingly before their recesses. The shoemakers display long rows of sharp-pointed slippers and boots, of soft red or yellow

leather: the slippers for women elegantly set off with all kinds of ornament. The perfumery shops are European in their appearance. Barbers, high and low, abound; in many cases performing their rites in the street, where you may see a grave Moslem sitting sedately while every part of his head is shaved except the one tuft by which he is to be pulled to his knees, after death, by the angel to whom he has to render an account of his life. The food bazaars are well supplied with ordinary bread, sweet cakes, milk, sugar, coffee, butcher's meat, and the fruits and vegetables of the season. Not to speak of oranges from Sidon and Joppa, or of dates from Cairo—dried figs, apricots, cherries, plums, grapes, pomegranates, almonds, and apples are all offered in abundance as they ripen, for at Damascus hardly a month is without its own fruit.

Like Christians, and probably from having adopted New Testament conceptions, the Moslem pictures heaven as having a great central metropolis, through which flows a river of crystal water, overshadowed by all kinds of trees, and giving off its irrigating streams all around. Standing on the edge of the waterless desert, Damascus has in all ages seemed to the Arabs, and Orientals generally, to realise this vision; nor, as I have said, can we readily conceive the vivid impression it creates in races who, outside its oasis, know only of sandy wastes where life is endurance rather than enjoyment. The source of this contrast is the river Barada—the Abana of the story of Naaman[1]—which rises in the uppermost heights of the Lebanon chain, and flows over the rocky plateau between the giant mass of Hermon and the main body of the mountains, to the north. Streams from both sides fall into it on its way, as it glides on towards the east, where the land is low and open, receiving still more tributaries

[1] 2 Kings v. 12.

on its course, and itself dividing into numerous natural and artificial arms. These, however, for the most part, afterwards reunite, and the whole stream finally loses itself in a marshy tract, interspersed with lakes, on the western edge of the great desert. Some miles farther south, a smaller river, rising in Lebanon, flows to the east, gathering on its way numerous streams from both sides, and finally vanishes in another swampy lake, south of that in which the Abana, or Amana, is lost. This is the Pharpar, Naaman's second river.[1] The wide plain watered by this network of rivulets and by these two main arteries, is the "Damascus Country;" and, as may readily be imagined, this fulness of water-supply turns into "a garden of God", what would, otherwise, be only a part of the great Syrian desert. Rich in any country, such a region is beyond the praise of words in the thirsty East, and hence, in all ages, Damascus—built on one of the main streams of the Abana—has withstood all vicissitudes, and it is still the busy hive of perhaps 150,000 inhabitants, although in past ages it has been repeatedly destroyed. The Damascenes are proud in the extreme of their rivers and of a remotely ancient system of irrigation connected with them, which provides every house with running water, and, according to local tradition, existed before the city itself was built. It is easy, therefore, to understand the haughty outburst of Naaman, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?"[2]

Damascus lies more than 2,000 feet above the sea, but is cut off from the cool sea wind by chains of mountains,

[1] 2 Kings v. 12.

[2] The Abana is further noticed in Canticles, where we read of the "top of Amana"—that is, the mountain in Anti-Lebanon from which the river springs.

while, on the other hand, it is open to the burning air of the desert. Its damp atmosphere, moreover, especially after sunset, exposes it to fevers. In winter it is sometimes cold; snow being not unknown, while fuel is scarce. Great mounds of dung stretch along outside the city wall, to be used as fuel for heating baths and ovens, showing that wood is not to be easily had. In the height of summer, the prevalent uncleanness of the streets, as well as the decay of vegetation, poisons the air with miasma; the services of hordes of town dogs, which eat up all kinds of carrion and garbage, alone preventing a periodical visit of the plague.

There are various "quarters" in the city, as in other Oriental towns. That of the Jews still lies, as in the days of the apostles, near "the street which is called Straight,"[1] originally a noble avenue, with a broad road in the middle, and a line of portico, like that of the Rue Rivoli in Paris, at each side. Now, however, only the portico on one side is open; the remainder being covered with houses or otherwise enclosed, although the great triple gate at one end of the street shows the original design. Some of the houses in the Jews' quarter, though mean enough externally, are wonderfully fine within. One of them showed what the mansion of a rich Oriental is like, better even than the rich houses I had already seen. At the outer entrance, a doorkeeper had his quarters, opening the wooden gate only after repeated knockings, like the porter who watches the gate in the parable of our Lord.[2] The court, when entrance was finally gained, proved to be paved with polished slabs of basalt, marble, and other costly stones. A fountain, and a flowing stream, with shrubs and trees, cooled the air. Round the open space rose the walls of the mansion,

[1] Acts ix. 11. [2] Mark xiii. 34.

beautifully adorned with sculpture, but, fine as they were, they were altogether transcended by the interior. Mirrors, marble pillars, arabesques, and mother-of-pearl attracted in turn; the ceiling, of fine wood, as high as that of many a village church, was richly gilded. Like the poor mud huts outside the city, the show chamber was divided into a higher and a lower portion. A stream of crystal water murmurs through the under half in many houses, though it was absent in this one. Two or three marble steps led up to the chief seats. Costly carpets were spread over the floor, and a divan, covered with silken cushions, ran along three sides of the wall. The "chief room" in such mansions often consists of three halls; that is, of a covered room at each side, and a wide open space between, forming, together, one side of the hollow square of the entire house. On the flat roof, which is protected by a strong breastwork, it is very common to sleep in the heat of summer, steps leading up to this retreat from the outer court, and often, also, from within the mansion.

The contrast between the palaces of the Jewish merchants and the buildings of the Christian quarter is great. Looking over the latter from an elevated position, one sees from the ruins of churches, monasteries, streets, and rows of mansions, which, nearly fifty years ago, lay in hideous confusion, that it has by no means even yet regained the prosperity that formerly marked it. On the 9th of July, 1860, the Mahommedan rabble, stirred up by the chiefs of their faith, broke loose on the Christian population and massacred more than 8,000 of them. Twelve churches, various monasteries, and nearly 4,000 houses were destroyed in the outbreak; the pillars of the great Greek church being actually broken into small pieces by the wild fury of the mob. Outside the city, a low, whitewashed, square building at the roadside, with no

windows, but only a door and one or two small square holes in the walls, contains all that is left of the victims. Bits of biers, clothing, and the wreck of human bodies are still to be seen when one looks in, and, even yet, the stench of corruption is overpowering. I never saw anything so horrible as that charnel-house. Fanaticism has not actually broken out since, but the spirit of the people is shown only too plainly by their firing at the walls of Christian tombs, whenever they get a chance.

There are very few fine buildings in Damascus; the great mosque, indeed, is the only one worth seeing. Originally a Christian church, as early as A.D. 400, the ground was seized by the Moslems soon after their conquest of Syria, and the church having been in great measure pulled down, the mosque, which is reckoned one of the wonders of the Mahommedan world, was raised in its place, only small parts of the original building being left. One of these, the top of the great gate, is still to be seen, by clambering to the top of one of the booths in the bazaar of the booksellers; the rich carving showing how magnificent the whole structure must have been. Over the gate—that is, over what is seen of it—there runs, in Greek, on a level with the flat roofs of the bazaar shops, the touching legend so bitterly falsified in this particular instance: "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion endureth from generation to generation." But we may safely take it as a prophecy, in this case, of the future resurrection of Christianity from the grave in which it has so long lain buried in Damascus, for the words must some day come true!

One of the present gates of the mosque is so heavy that it takes five men to open or shut it, and everything else is on the same scale. Wonderful mosaics look down from the walls; wood-carving of the finest abounds, and

the great pillars look grand, in spite of their drapery of whitewash. The plan of the mosque is that of a basilica, or ancient Christian church: a nave with two aisles, formed by two rows of pillars, and a transept with four massive pillars of coloured marble. The dome towers high aloft, but, like everything around, it is in a state of decay. On the south side is a row of arched windows, filled with beautiful stained glass, and beneath these are prayer-niches, turned in the direction of Mecca. But the great gate still shows the Christian origin of the whole vast fabric, for on it you may see a chalice and paten, in bronze. In its glory, the mosque must have been very fine. The Khalif el Welîd, by whom it was built, adorned its interior with a lavish hand, studding it with columns of granite, syenite, marble, and porphyry, brought to Damascus at a huge cost. Much, however, of the early splendour is gone. The original gigantic cupola was burnt; the present one being an inferior restoration. The first pavement was of mosaic, the work of a Byzantine artist. Seventy-four stained glass windows threw a rich dim light over the aisles and nave. Great hospices were built round the walls, for the entertainment of the countless pilgrims who flocked to the spot, and the ritual of worship increased in splendour with the fame of the sanctuary. The mosque soon became a place where prayer never ceased. The reading of the Koran, and supplication, says an Arabic chronicler of the fourteenth century, were never intermitted, either by day or by night; 600 orthodox Moslems being paid for constant attendance, that an audience should never be wanting. A single prayer in this mosque was affirmed to be worth more than thirty thousand elsewhere; the place being so holy that Allah would preserve it forty years after the rest of the world was destroyed, that men might still pray to him in it.

Damascus is first mentioned in the Bible as the place where Abraham bought the slave whom he made his steward.[1] It is said that the patriarch, who was at the head of a powerful tribe, made himself master of the then feeble town, but this may be only an unfounded tradition. We next hear of the city when the "Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer, king of Zobah," in the reign of David, who soon after defeated their army and made himself master of their territory,[2] putting "garrisons in Syria of Damascus," and receiving tribute from it. But this state of things did not last long, for a revolt under one Rezin seems to have re-established the independence of Syria, in the days of Solomon.[3] The feud thus early begun between Damascus and Israel continued till the Syrian capital was finally taken by Assyria; the history both of the Ten Tribes and of Judah being greatly occupied with the invasions of their territory by the relentless Syrian foe. One inroad took place under Baasha, the northern kingdom being then assailed; while under Omri it was so weakened that the Damascenes obtained the right of opening a trade quarter in Samaria.[4] Benhadad II., pushing matters still further, actually besieged Samaria under Ahab, but was in the end forced to become for a time that king's dependent.[5] Three years later, however, Ahab met his death while besieging Ramoth Gilead, which had not been yielded to him, as it ought to have been under the treaty.[6] Under Hazael, Syria once more "oppressed Israel greatly," the king extending his inroads over Judah also.[7] For a time, after this, victory followed the Hebrews, but in the

[1] Gen. xv. 2.
[2] 2 Sam. viii. 5, 6; 1 Chron. xviii. 5, 6.
[3] 1 Kings xi. 23—25.
[4] 1 Kings xv. 19, 20; xx. 34.
[5] 1 Kings xx. 13—34.
[6] 1 Kings xxii. 1—4, 15—37.
[7] 2 Kings viii. 28, 29; x. 32, 33; xii. 17, 18; Amos vi. 1, 2.

end, Pul, of Assyria, took Damascus and closed the struggle.

Mahommedanism is nowhere more bigoted than in Damascus; hence missionary work makes little apparent progress in winning converts from that faith, though I was told that some had secretly become Christians. But such proselytes are of little worth, even if they really exist, for if a man has not the courage to confess his faith, he helps error rather than the truth he claims to have embraced. Much, however, is being done in the city. The Irish Presbyterian Church has two missionaries, with, I understood, seventy communicants, but not from among the Moslems; and it also has schools in Damascus and the villages round it. A Bedouin Mission, under the Church Missionary Society, cares for the Arabs of the Haurân; its admirable agent, the Rev. W. F. Connor, by his arduous journeys from camp to camp, over a great district, amidst much fatigue of body and mind, and with great self-denial alike in food and lodging, helping to bring before us features of the early efforts of Christianity in these very regions, when the Church was scattered abroad everywhere, preaching the Gospel:[1] There are also a Jews' Mission, with a large Sunday-school; a Medical Mission from the Edinburgh Society for such work; a vigorous branch of the British Syrian school organisation, with 150 girls under instruction; and a Blind School, with forty-five poor little sightless scholars. There is, besides, a boys' school, with an attendance of 135. Good is thus being done, beyond question.

The view of Damascus from any lofty roof in the city is very striking. A vast sea of low, flat-roofed houses, with innumerable small domes rising from them like so many bubbles, stretches out on every side, the minarets

[1] Acts viii. 4.

and cupolas of nearly 200 mosques standing up from among them. Round this human hive a broad band of green marks the far-famed gardens, which, however, are very different from our beautifully-kept grounds; owing much more to nature than to either art or care. In the distance, to the west, the silver head of Hermon glitters in the upper sky. To the north rise frightfully desolate and barren mountains, a vivid contrast to the laughing fertility of the plain at their feet. Eastwards, there stretches out beyond the horizon a great plain, alternating in tracts of luscious meadow, rich corn-field, and stony pasture. At the foot of the northern hills, on a site higher than that of Damascus, the rich suburb, Salahiyeh, attracts the eye: a favourite resort in summer for the richer classes of the city, when the heat makes removal desirable alike for health and comfort.

With all the neglect of which they show signs, the gardens, in such a region, are a wonderful attraction, with their many spots of romantic beauty, where nature has its own way and water is abundant. You come in one place upon a broad stream, embowered in green, with a verdant island rising in the midst of the waters, and crowned by a mill. Farther on, part of the stream rushes along in a deeper bed; elsewhere, another arm of the river flows gently beneath bending trees. Over the banks there is, it may be, a balcony projecting from some suburban house or mansion, a lounging-place where coffee and nargilehs beguile the afternoon. The charm of such a retreat in the dry, fiery summer may be imagined. The Moslem thinks he realises, in these many-coloured groves and shining waters, the ideal of paradise in the Koran, as a place of shady trees overhanging crystal streams; and, very possibly, the imagery of Mahomet was drawn from the sights that met him round Damascus, for they are nowhere

else to be seen. But the paradise is only an earthly one, for in the summer time, when its coolness and beauty are of greatest value, the moist air is filled with countless stinging insects. Fevers, also, and other maladies are more plentiful than elsewhere. Hence Europeans, as far as possible, leave the city in the hot months, and seek a home in the mountains, as is also done at Beirout. Yet there are few places in the world so famous for fruit as this region. Here flourish apricots, cherries, almonds, plums, apples, pears, walnuts, pomegranates, mulberries, pistachio-nuts, olives, citrons, and magnificent grapes, of which latter is made a wine much prized throughout Syria. Eight larger arms of the Abana flow through the plain west of the city, and there are, besides, many noble springs which burst from the ground at different parts.

Before leaving Damascus I paid a visit to the tomb of Saladin, which I was able to see through the influence of some friends. It stands in a paved court near the great mosque, in a detached building, neglected and in very bad repair. Inside a moderately-sized chamber stood a raised tomb, very simple, built of inlaid slabs of marble; the whole about five feet high, with raised stones at each end; a huge green turban crowning that at the head. The old turban, they said, was underneath, but fresh swathings being added as each earlier one decays, the whole has now come to a vast circumference. At the side of Saladin's modest resting-place was that of his most famous general, but this tomb was still in the humble original wood, now nearly 900 years old.[1] On this also, at the head, rested a huge green turban. Such was all that remained of the glory of the favourite lieutenant of the great Sultan of Egypt and of Syria, and of that Sultan himself, the destroyer of the Christian

[1] Saladin was born about 1137, and died in 1193, being only fifty-six.

empire of Palestine, but the most chivalrous of foes. The mouldered form that lay so near me had once led a victorious army into Damascus, Aleppo, Edessa, Nisibis, and Jerusalem, and had received the swords of the captive knights and princes of Christendom, after the great battle of Hattîn. Once the glory of Islam and the equal foe of the mightiest kings, a lonely tomb now holds all his greatness! I could not help thinking of the grand lines on Hannibal's glory in life and nothingness in death, in the Tenth Satire of Juvenal.

CHAPTER LI.

BAALBEK AND THE CEDARS OF LEBANON.

BEFORE leaving Damascus a curious illustration of the cost of war crossed my way. A British hussar officer accompanied by a veterinary surgeon arrived at the hotel, on a mission to the city to purchase 300 horses for the force in the Soudan sent to rescue General Gordon. From Damascus they were going to Barbary, on the same errand, and they asked my friend the army surgeon to go with them. I afterwards found that a great number of the students of the American College at Beirout had been appointed interpreters for our troops, and were away with them on the weary ascent of the Nile towards Khartoum!

The diligence from Damascus to the coast started at half-past four in the morning, long before daylight. We were tired of tents, our experience in the entomological direction having been very unpleasant. The road was excellent: the diligence horrible. I was perched aloft behind the driver, with two companions, in a space which could scarcely by any squeezing hold three. My companion had a seat inside, looking out through a window in front at the horses' tails. It was delightful, however, to sit, after the weariness of long weeks on horseback at a walk; and the rate at which we swept on kept one supplied with plenty of novelty in the landscape, after light had revealed the country round. The journey for five hours was up and down the long slopes of Lebanon, which rose

and fell in seemingly endless succession. How far the road is above the sea at its highest point, I do not know, but it certainly climbs thousands of feet. Six horses, or horses and mules, dragged us upwards, very rarely ceasing to trot at a good rate. It was curious, as the day went on, to see European agency at various points—watering-carts, rollers to crush the stones on the road into smoothness, and wheelbarrows to carry material hither or thither. The stations were well built of stone, but there was no provision for refreshment. The driver faced the cold in a fur coat and manifold wrappings; and his assistant, at his side, covered his head with a "kefiyeh" and placidly slept, snug in coat over coat.

Our goal, on the way to Baalbek, was Shtora, a small village in the magnificent plain that runs up between the two chains of Lebanon. At a small station-house at the roadside, a Montenegrin host offered refreshments prepared by his wife, a Greek; and to make the spot still more cosmopolitan, our fellow-guests were a German and his wife from Constantinople, where they were in business. Sheep must be abundant at Shtora, if one may judge from the huge array of stewed sheep's kidneys served at dinner: the one but ample dish. Fruit, and wine afterwards, completed the meal.

The Bekaa, or "the Cleft," as the broad valley on the edge of which Shtora lies, close under the western hills, is called, is a broad plain, known anciently as Cœle-Syria, or "Hollow Syria." In ages long past every part of this magnificent sweep of country, and far up the mountains on each side of it, was richly cultivated; and it is still at many parts green with crops, or rich with vineyards and gardens, though the population is not sufficient to use more than a small space of its wide surface. The road to Baalbek, simply a track with no artificial

improvement, runs to the north along the foot of the hills, some of which, on both sides, rise into magnificent mountains. Our conveyance was a wretched affair, with seats of American cloth, so narrow and smooth that it was almost impossible to keep one's seat on them, and the two sides so close together that they could only have been occupied by passengers fitting their knees into each other, like the teeth of two combs. Luckily there was only one other passenger besides the doctor and myself, so that this trouble was escaped. The roof barely allowed us to sit up straight, but we could lean to one side. Had there been six travellers, as there are, I suppose, at times, figs in a box would not have been packed more closely than we should have been. Flat-roofed villages, chiefly built of stone, with great cattle-houses, brightened the slopes at intervals. Stems of vines trained along the ground, but not yet budding, spoke of future grape-gatherings; orchards of apricots, peaches, figs, pears, and many other fruit-trees abounded; brooks rushed down the hills, or flowed peacefully on their course to the Litany through fields which they fertilised; shining in great bends in the midst of the plain. The men were soberly dressed in jackets and baggy trousers; but the women were like so many tulips in their brightness and variety of colour.

The driver, a mere lad, showed himself an adept at roguery. On changing horses he flatly refused to take us any farther without a present of quite a sum of money, and we were ultimately forced to give it, but he paid dearly for his cleverness. The teacher of the American school at Baalbek, hearing of the swindle, begged us to go with him to the Turkish kadi, who gave us speedy redress. Summoning before him the representative of the omnibus, who lived in the village, he made him, then and there, refund

us what had been charged beyond the legal fare: a matter of joy to the schoolmaster, to whom we handed it over as our subscription to his Mission.

It was afternoon before we drew up at Baalbek, after stopping a short distance from it to look at a circular "weli," or place of prayer, with polished red granite columns carried off from the ancient temple. No interest attaches to this confused theft from antiquity. "The Victoria Hotel," at which we rested, is clean and comfortable enough when you get into your bedroom, but the entrance is like that of a stable-yard. Clean beds and good plain fare, however, left no ground for complaint, especially as the charges were moderate. We were at last at Heliopolis, or Baalbek, famous from the remotest ages for its temples, as one sees in the tract on "The Syrian Goddess," attributed to Lucian. Lofty pillars, proclaiming its situation, are seen from a great distance, standing on higher ground than the plain. The great ruins are to the west of the present village of Baalbek, close to the foot of the eastern hills. Their special glory seems to lie in the fact that Grecian art has here, in a way quite unique, imitated the colossal scale of the monuments of ancient Egypt, and yet has impressed on the whole the stamp of free, all-constraining genius. Rows of pillars, of huge girth and height, tower upwards in consummate elegance of proportion, seeming slender and graceful in their loftiness, and bearing Corinthian capitals, exquisitely carved, which look delicate as those of Greece. Yet two men cannot make their arms meet round the columns, and the capitals are more than seven feet across. With the mouldings below, the colonnade rises to the height of seventy-six feet. The ruins extend over a vast space, which is well-nigh covered with fragments of huge pillars, or even whole ones, gigantic architraves and plinths, each carved with the

most elaborate finish, and great hewn stones. Earthquakes have borne the chief part in bringing about this destruction, but barbarism also has lent its hand. Great holes are to be seen in many pillars, where the natives have cut out the clamps which held the different stones together; the iron and lead being of supreme value in their eyes. The pillars would be wonderful even if they rested on a natural surface, but it is still more astonishing to find that the whole series of temples is built on an artificial platform, so high that the colossal archways and substructures beneath, of themselves excite admiration.

The portico of the great temple is at the east end of the ruins, and must have been approached by flights of steps, as its floor is nearly twenty feet above the orchards below. It is thirty-six feet in width, and had, originally, twelve columns before it; the bases remaining of two of them record that the temple was erected by Antoninus Pius, who reigned from A.D. 138 to A.D. 161, and by Julia Domna, the wife of the Emperor Septimus Severus, who was married to him about A.D. 175, and ended her days in A.D. 217 by starving herself to death! A poor exit for one who had been empress of the world for more than forty years! Passing through this portico, you enter a six-sided court, sixty-five yards long and about eighty-three yards wide, more or less in ruin. From this you pass into the great court of the temple, 147 yards long and 123 yards wide; its walls elaborately ornamented, though in an inferior style to some other parts, having been built later. Chambers open at many points—once the cells of priests and the storehouses of the sanctuary; all richly ornamented. Before these stood rows of pillars, some of them of syenite, but all, or nearly all, long since fallen; their wreck lying about, or buried in the deep rubbish. Beyond this great court,

which of course was never roofed, stood the chief temple; but of this little now remains. The six huge columns, seen long before reaching Baalbek, are, indeed, all that is left of it. Nineteen such pillars once rose on each side of the temple, and ten at each end, many of them still lying around in melancholy ruin. The sanctuary they surrounded stood on a basement fifty feet above the surrounding plain, but even its shape can no longer be traced.

Distinct from the great edifice, another temple, smaller in size but wonderful in its architecture, stands a little to the south-east, the far-famed Temple of the Sun. It has no court, and rises from a platform of its own, ascended in old times by a staircase from the plain below. Like the larger ruin, it was once surrounded by fine pillars, fifteen on each side, and eight at each end, but only a few remains of these survive. A gorgeous ceiling of carved stone once united this grand arcade, all round, with the temple; but it is, of course, gone, although its beauty may be imagined from huge fragments strewn on the ground. The great gateway is famous as one of the most beautiful remains of antiquity. Door-posts and lintel, alike, are huge monoliths, carved elaborately with the most charming skill. Overhead, a gigantic mass from the centre of the lintel, fractured by its own enormous weight or by lightning as long ago as 1759, hung down, till lately, as if about to fall, nothing holding it in its place save a slight bulge at its upper side; but this Damocles' sword has now, after more than 200 years, been supported by an unsightly shaft of masonry, built by the Turks, under pressure from the traveller Burton, recently our consul at Damascus. A great pillar at each side of this gateway contained a winding stair, by which to reach the top of the building, but one of the two flights is now gone, and the other is partially in ruins.

The open area inside is no less elaborately ornamented than the magnificent entrance, twelve fluted Corinthian pillars adorning the sides, while the spaces between them are set off with finely-carved niches, originally filled with statues. At the far end was once the Holy of Holies, which had been roofed over with great stones, two immense pillars supporting the heavy weight, as seen by their fragments still lying about. Three arches had reached across as a screen, and between the pillars had risen a stone daïs, the base from which these arches sprang, four or five feet high, and carved with figures playing instruments. A statue twelve feet high, now in Constantinople, stood on this daïs. Round the bends of the niches and blind windows on the walls are wreaths of fruits; here grapes, there acorns, yonder figs; but it is striking to notice that some of the window-like niches have never been finished, the carving to complete them not having been added. Arches, from the wall, bend over towards those which faced the spectators—perhaps to bear up a gallery for some special purpose; and beneath the daïs are four chambers, built for what ends I know not. How grand the whole must have been, may be judged from the fact that the Corinthian capital of one fallen pillar *measures nearly seventeen feet in circumference.*

The vaults beneath the great temple seem to me almost as wonderful as the marvellous structure above them. The temple, with its throngs of worshippers, rested with all its incalculable weight on a series of substructions, through which one wanders as through the stone arches of huge bazaars, which branch out in every direction. Indeed, the seen bore but a modest proportion to the unseen, just as in the great Temple of Jerusalem. Nor is the size of the stones in the outer enclosing wall, which shut in all the magnificence of Baalbek, less amazing.

At one place this wall is ten feet thick, and contains nine stones, each about thirty feet long. These, however, seem nothing compared to three others in the western wall—perhaps the largest stones ever used in building. One is sixty-four feet long, and the shortest of the three is sixty-two feet, while each is about thirteen feet high, and probably as many feet thick, and these vast masses are fitted so exactly to each other that it is easy to overlook the place where they join. Indeed, it is difficult to thrust a penknife-blade between them. How were such masses separated from the rock of the quarry? How were they dragged to their present site? And, above all, how were they lifted to the top of substructions nineteen feet high, and then laid down in position as neatly as if they had been ordinary blocks? Who did it, and when? The engineers of antiquity, with no steam-power to help them, must have been wondrously clever. We are so accustomed to think ourselves, and the present generation all over the world, more advanced than the ancients, that it is well to have our pride abated by such miracles as this at Baalbek.

A third very beautiful temple, smaller than the two others, and well preserved, stands on the outskirts of the present village. Passing between dry stone walls enclosing gardens and orchards, and stepping over running brooks which keep all things brightly green, you enter a quiet spot, beautiful with flowing water and fruit-trees. Here is a semi-circular structure, with eight fine pillars outside; between these are niches, with shell tops; wreaths of foliage hang down above, but the whole is now slowly decaying. What god was worshipped here? The great temples, we know, occupied the place of older ones sacred to Baal, the sun-god, for the Greek name of Baalbek was Heliopolis, "the City of the Sun," but it is a

matter of doubt to whom this miniature sanctuary was dedicated.

A quarter of an hour's walk to the south-east of the village brings you to the ancient quarries, where is another colossal block, probably intended to be built, like the other huge masses, into the outer wall of the Acropolis. The only thing I have seen to be compared with it is the vast obelisk in the quarries of Assouan, lying just as its hewers and polishers left it, unfinished, thousands of years ago. The Baalbek stone is seventy-one feet long, fourteen feet high, and thirteen feet wide, with a weight of about 1,500 tons. The rock above and around it has been cut away, so that it stands in a wide, open space—a broad level yard, in which you wander round it at your will. The huge mass has never been quite detached from the parent rock below. It lies in an inclined position, one end considerably higher than the other; and it *will* lie, till the general conflagration, unless broken up by the manikins of these later ages, for who, now, could think of moving it?

Wishing to take a short cut back to the hotel, I clambered to the top of the quarry, and went through the field thus reached. It was exactly like walking over a shingle beach. Not a particle of soil was visible: only deep beds of rounded stones, in which your feet sank. Out of these, to my astonishment, were growing stumps of vines, regularly planted over the whole surface. It was impossible not to laugh, for the stones had been carefully ploughed, and there was no question as to the presence of the vines. The teacher of the American Mission school, who was with me, supplied the much-needed explanation. There was good soil below the stones, and the vines struck down to that, and thus flourished in this sea of shingle. In this world things are not

always what they seem! A short walk to the village, with a line of telegraph posts for company, and I was once more at the hotel. The posts ran past the great ruins! This, however, was only one illustration of the confusion of new and old in such a place. In the sitting-room, the stove bore the name of a Glasgow firm; the cane-chairs, of bent wood, were from Vienna; the marble top of the table was from Italy; the carpets from Persia; the curtains from England; the lamps from Germany; and the covering of the sofa, or divan, along the wall, was from Damascus. Nor was the modern world represented only by furniture and the telegraph. The American Mission school, taught by a Syrian, educated at the American College at Beirout, had thirty children, and in winter has fifty; the Roman Catholic school had about seventy boys and fifty or sixty girls; and a school of the British Syrian School Society, taught by a dear bright old lady, had 150 children of all ages—many of them Mahommedan girls. Women, the mistress told me, came to learn to sew and cut out; some, also, to the Bible class and to prayers. A Bible-woman reads in their houses among them, and, as I well believe, "does real good, though she never gets any of them to become Christians."

These wondrous temples of Baalbek raise strange thoughts. Built, as we have seen, in the second half of the second century after our Lord's birth—that is, after from a hundred to a hundred and fifty years of apostolic and missionary effort—they show that heathenism was then still so triumphant within two hundred miles of Jerusalem, and within one hundred miles of Christ's own city, Capernaum, as to be able to raise temples of such magnificence that their ruins even now excite the astonishment of the world. The lavish wealth

expended on local temples in a spot of the empire practically as far from its centre, Rome, as Canada is from London, excites amazement. How rich must the country around have been, to furnish means for such outlay; how unspeakably different from its present condition of exhaustion and decay! How slow, on the other hand, must have been the spread of Christianity, even in its native district, when public opinion remained so uninfluenced by it after a considerable time, measured by generations, as to raise these mighty fanes in honour of the ancient gods, whom the new faith came to supersede! To expect a rapid conversion of heathen countries now, is clearly unreasonable. The spread of leaven, to which our Lord compared His doctrine, is quiet and gradual. A change in the hereditary creed of a nation can only be brought about by slow and unperceived degrees, like the silent progress of the shadow on the dial, from dawn to distant noon.

There is, however, still another thought. The Temple of the Sun, as we have seen, was never finished. The rough, uncarved tops of the niches in the walls show this conclusively. Baalbek was, therefore, the last sunset glory of an expiring faith, which could plan, and in great part carry out, the magnificent tribute to its divinities which these sculptured stone-wonders still show. But its strength failed before this last and grandest effort was completed, and left a monument to the past, rather than a gift to the future. Christianity was gaining ground while the old religion was slowly dying, and thus Baalbek became only a grand memento of that which was soon to pass away.

Baalbek stands nearly 4,000 feet above the sea, but it is a long and weary climb of nine hours to what remains of the great cedar-wood which once clothed the upper

slopes of Lebanon. It lies slightly to the north-west, across the Bekaa, which, at Baalbek, forms the watershed between the head-waters of the Litany flowing to the south-west, and the Orontes making its way to the north-east. Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar had his headquarters during the campaign against Jerusalem, is in this upper valley, on the Orontes, about forty miles beyond Baalbek: the armies of Assyria and Babylon coming down from the north[1] by this route. To this place were brought Zedekiah, King of Judæa, and his sons, and afterwards some of the most important prisoners; the king to be blinded; the others to be put to death, probably by impaling, which is the usual form of punishment seen on the Assyrian monuments, though flaying alive is sometimes to be noticed.[2] Here also Pharaoh Necho waited, after his victory over the Babylonians at Carchemish, and from this point he summoned Jehoahaz to his presence, from Jerusalem.[3] Riblah was almost the farthest northern limit of David's empire, during the short time of Jewish greatness;[4] Lake Hums, near which stood Kadesh, the sacred city of Hamath, and once the capital of the Hittites, being only ten or twelve miles north of it.[5] Hamath seems to have continued subject to Solomon,[6] who built "store cities" in it, but after his death it appears to have regained its independence. Jeroboam II., indeed, "recovered" the district of "Hamath,"[7] but he apparently destroyed the capital, as Amos speaks of it as lying desolate.[8]

[1] Isa. xiv. 31; xli. 28; Jer iv. 6; vi. 22; x. 22; l. 9, 41; li. 48.
[2] Jer. xxxix. 5, 6; lii. 9, 10, 26, 27; 2 Kings xxv. 6, 20, 21.
[3] 2 Kings xxiii. 33.
[4] 2 Sam. viii. 10.
[5] Respecting Kadesh on the Orontes, see *Palestine Fund Reports*, 1881, pp. 163, 218; 1882, p. 253.
[6] 1 Kings iv. 21—24; 2 Chron. viii. 4.
[7] 2 Kings xiv. 28. [8] Amos vi. 2.

After crossing the plain, the path from Baalbek to the cedars leads over the sides of the mountains; heights and valleys succeed each other, with little to notice except the roughness of the road and the magnificence of the view. The village of Ainita, or "Spring-town," lies in a gap on the hills; and, to justify its name, some streams flow past, from the melted snows of the upper heights. Though 5,000 feet above the sea, it is sheltered from the cold by high walls of mountain, but there is nothing attractive about it. Dwarf oaks and mountain junipers are, indeed, almost the only growth that one sees on the way to it, or in its neighbourhood. From this point the road is much steeper, with less vegetation, and leads over what is the snow-bed in winter, though goats feed here when the first patches of ground are left bare of the melted snow. From the top of Jebel Makmel, about 8,500 feet above the sea, the most glorious view presents itself: on the south, Mount Hermon, rising in snow-capped grandeur, with mountains hardly lower surrounding it on every side; a little to the north, the highest summit of Lebanon, over 10,000 feet above the Mediterranean, lifts its awful head, the picture of sublimity. Far below, to the south, the great valley of Cœle-Syria, the Bekaa, stretches out in rich green—a plain worthy of the grandeur of the mountains which enclose it on both sides.

From this point begins the descent to the cedars. Viewed from Jebel Makmel, they seem only a speck of green, beyond the beds of snow lying on the way to them: 2,500 feet of winding paths, down the slopes of the giant hills, must be descended before the shoulder of Lebanon, 6,300 feet above the sea, on which they grow, is reached. The ground which they cover, though varying in its slope, is the top of a height of white

limestone, on which the decaying cones and fronds have formed a dark-coloured soil. The oldest trees are about nine in number, and the whole grove includes about 350 cedars, large and small. Unfortunately, however, no care is taken of them, goats being allowed to eat the young shoots, and monks and visitors alike using their branches for fuel. A Maronite chapel stands among them, and a festival which is held yearly helps greatly in the destruction, many fires being then kindled. Of course there are countless names cut in the bark—as if any one were the better for such vandalism! The oldest trees are of great age, one of them being forty feet in circumference, but even to it no respect is paid, branches being ruthlessly broken off when wanted for any purpose, however trifling.

The Jews used cedar very largely for their grander buildings, and it was in no less demand among other nations, so that it is a wonder that the forests which must once have clothed the slopes of a vast district have now any surviving representatives at all. In the Assyrian records we frequently read of great quantities of this valued timber being carried away to the Euphrates, and when we add the home consumption by the Phœnicians, and their vast exports to many countries, the number of trees destroyed must have been enormous. In Bible times the forests were the ideal of sylvan grandeur, for there is no other tree in Palestine to be compared to the cedar for size. It was natural, therefore, for Ezekiel to picture the Assyrian, so dreaded in his day, as "a cedar in Lebanon, with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature, and his top among the thick clouds.[1] The waters made him great, the deep nourished him, with her rivers running round about his plantation, and sent out

[1] Correct translation.

her little rivers unto all the trees of the field. Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long, because of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young." [1]

From Baalbek back to Shtora we travelled in the toy omnibus in which we had come, starting at five in the morning, so as to catch the diligence on its way to Beirout. The villages on the road strengthened my conviction that the people of Palestine, like those of Syria, have a veritable dread of water, especially if soap be along with it—in fact, that they labour under a universal hydrophobia. They seem never to clean themselves. The waiter at the hotel had such filthy hands that I told him I would not eat if he did not wash them; and the rest of the community were no better. The schoolmistress told me she had an unpleasant time of it in this respect. It rained a good part of the way, and the people looked wretched in their thin clothes, under the drizzling showers. Quantities of yellow lupins, from last year, showed where fields of that legume had been sown. Hawks were as numerous as elsewhere. Indeed, the number of predatory birds in Palestine and Syria is wonderful, but as they seem to be the chief enemies of the small birds, man taking little part in this form of destruction, there is no scarcity of these charming creatures. Vines abounded, the short stems bent from the north, so as to catch the southern sun, and propped by a short stick, to keep them from the ground. Hedges and trees were bursting into leaf, for it was the 28th of March. The houses were of stone, with flat roofs, formed of layers of brush laid on rough cross-beams, with a thick coating

[1] Ezek. xxxi. 3—6.

of mud, the whole being kept solid by frequent pressure of a heavy roller. Mud seemed to be used as the cement for the house-walls. Very few trees, except some poplars now and then, were to be seen on the plains or the hills; but orchards became numerous as we approached Shtora, while a broad stream ran alongside the road, with side channels at many points, leading off the water into runnels over the fields.

CHAPTER LII.

BEIROUT.

From Shtora to Beirout is precisely like the journey from Damascus to Shtora: a long ascent of one side of a great mountain-chain, and then a descent on the other side. The French road is magnificent, and is kept in splendid repair. Hours of climbing steep heights, zig-zagged to make them easier; of galloping along the table-land thus gained, and then of climbing another ascent, filled the one half of the journey, and all this was exactly reversed in the second half. Near Shtora, the hill-sides are very generally terraced; flat-roofed villages clinging to the steep mountains, often very picturesquely. Long trains of waggons, filled with goods, met us, toiling on from Beirout to Damascus, with four horses to drag them them up the hills. This is a wonderful improvement on the Oriental system of camels, mules, and asses, laden as heavily as they can bear, jogging on at two miles an hour; but that primitive mode is still used even on this line of travel, for we passed several long jingling processions of these unfortunate beasts. They seemed, however, to keep off the French highway, as I noticed them always making their way, as they best could, over tracks up and down the hill-sides near our road, but never on it, thus saving the tolls. No country shows a more striking continuity of usages than Palestine or Syria. The tent, just as it was in Abraham's day, is pitched in the

open ground; the horse, the mule, or the ass is still the only means of travel, except one's feet, over most of the country. But we have, in other parts, such Western horrors as the toy omnibus to Baalbek, the omnibus from Joppa to Jerusalem, and the regular French diligence from Damascus to Beirout. The turban keeps its ground, notwithstanding an invasion of billycocks and tall black hats; the world-old plough, which a man can carry home on his shoulder, still triumphantly scratches the fields, although European ploughs, drawn by horses, may be seen turning furrows on the German settlements in the Plain of Sharon.

The country, as it slopes towards Beirout, is beautiful. After being almost amid the snow on the mountain-tops, you gradually find yourself descending towards comfortable villages, wide orchards, vineyards, and broad pastures, covered by great herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and goats. Streams rush down from the hills at many places, on their noisy way to the valley, often far below. At the highest point of the journey, where the horizon is widest, the scene was magnificent. Hermon and its satellites rose to the south-east, bearing up the heavens, all their summits covered, low down, with dazzling white. Far beneath us, beyond the multitudinous hills that sank in giant steps to the lower levels, were green plains, with a silver river winding through them. To the north, snow-covered peaks rivalled the grandeur of those of Hermon in the south.

The stations by the roadside are used as khans, at which the drivers of freight-mules, camels, or asses rest at night. One of these was very full, many guests happening to come at one time, with the result, curious to notice in connection with the story of our Saviour's birth, that many of them had to sleep with the horses, mules, or

other beasts, the inn being full.[1] How is it that the four-footed burden-bearers of the East are so strong on such miserable food? The loads they carry are enormous, yet their only recompense is some "teben," or broken straw, with an occasional handful of barley. Nevertheless, they are not particularly thin. Perhaps the chance meals in rare grassy parts help to make them strong, or at least to give them a better look. The cattle, however, that are left to graze on whatever the hills afford, are in most places very wretched; nor does their condition improve when the hot sun has withered the pastures, and they are left to draw sustenance from the universal "teben." That it was the same in Bible times is shown from the prophet's poetical anticipation of the Messianic Kingdom, as marked by the lion eating "teben" like the ox.[2]

It was intensely interesting to watch the change of scenery as the diligence trundled or galloped on. The broad valley of the Bekaa and the snowy glory of Hermon after a time gave place to waste mountain precipices, profound gorges, glens, and clefts, which brought to mind the description, possibly of the same route, by the Egyptian "Mohar," thousands of years ago, when his chariot was broken to pieces in crossing the Lebanon chain. At last, a turn of the road gave us a glimpse of the sea and of Beirout. From this point the road wound for some distance along a ledge cut for it high up on a mountain-ridge south of a mighty valley, into which it was half alarming, and quite entrancing, to look down. The north wall of the hills beyond rose, precipitously, to the snow-level, and above it. Numerous villages dotted the broad hollow below, or clung to the slopes, which were mantled with dark pine-woods, now seen by us for the first time in Syria. Pasture and grain fields enamelled the

[1] Luke ii. 7. [2] Isa. xi. 7.

floor of the valley, through which wended a broad river. Thousands of mulberry-trees, all kept to a moderate height, but very leafy, showed that we had come into the region of the renowned silk industry of Lebanon. Even here fanaticism raged in the great outbreak of 1860, which is still the most interesting subject of conversation in these parts. Whole villages were destroyed, after their populations had been hewn down or driven out. The lower we came from the hills the more lovely was the prospect, the sea stretching before us, with Beirout at its edge. The slopes beside the villages were carefully terraced, and sown with wheat and tobacco, or planted with vines, figs, or mulberry-trees.

Beirout stands on the north-west point of a broad, hilly cape, rising in a long bank over pleasant hollows and broad plains, all seeming to be one great wood, here of dark pines, yonder of bright green mulberry-trees; hundreds of lofty palms rising, from point to point, above the sea of verdure; the whole making a picture even more beautiful than the palm-groves of Egypt. The road, as we reached the level by which the town is approached, became at last alive with pedestrians, male and female, in picturesque dresses; riders on horses, asses, and mules; trains of camels, with their heads high in the air, and huge loads on their humps; gigs, carts, waggons, and carriages, some with liveried drivers. Many coffee-houses, in thoroughly Eastern style, invited the wayfarer; others had their Oriental features set off by a strange intermingling of Western innovations—pompous names for the establishment, among the rest. I was glad, however, when I at last found myself in the "Hôtel de l'Orient," a fine house by the seashore, where every comfort was supplied at the modest charge of ten francs a day, a third less than if I had had tourist coupons. The large dining-room was

paved with marble; the windows looked out on the sea and the mountains north of the town, a view indescribably beautiful; the bedrooms were delightfully clean and comfortable.

Beirout does not seem to be mentioned in the Bible, for the Berothai of which we read[1] is not generally believed to be identical with it, though some have thought it is. The name may have come from the numerous "Beeroth," or wells, of the neighbourhood, but this also is only a conjecture. The town had not, like Tyre and Sidon, a great name in remote antiquity, but comes gloomily enough into notice under Herod Agrippa, who, besides building baths and theatres in it, sought to please the populace by giving an exhibition of gladiators, with their cruel combats. Here, also, as at Cæsarea Philippi, Titus made bands of Jewish prisoners, after the fall of Jerusalem, engage in mortal strife with each other, to grace a holiday. Silk has long been a special local industry, the Byzantines being supplied with it from Beirout and Tyre. Hence the great plantations of mulberries and the skilful cultivation of the silkworm are a feature of the district reaching back for many ages, though of late years greatly developed beyond its condition in the last century. The Crusaders once held Beirout, as they did the whole land south, as far as Gaza, until the disastrous battle of Hattîn forced them to yield it to the Saracen.

The town slopes gently upwards from the narrow beach, but in itself has no special attractions Nature, however, more than makes amends. The wonderful mountains which shut it in at a distance, on every side, and the great azure ocean, between them, give it charms that never fail to please. In summer the richer inhabitants betake themselves to the hills, but in spring the climate is

[1] 2 Sam. viii. 8; Ezek. xlvii. 16.

delightful. Indeed, even in winter, when there is much rain, flowers of all kinds flourish abundantly. It is no longer possible for the population to speak with their enemies in the gate,[1] for the town walls and gates have disappeared, except a few useless fragments. Such a change marks the advance of civilisation, for gates imply danger of attack: the want of them speaks of peace. It is curious to see how even the New Testament imagery of heaven is coloured by their indispensable association with an ancient city, for the New Jerusalem has twelve gates, though, as becomes the reign of celestial peace, they are not "shut at all by day," which lasts unbroken, "for there shall be no night there."[2] If "Revelation" were to be written now, the imagery would necessarily be different, for in civilised regions a city with gates is happily rare. Even so far back as Jacob's day, however, heaven could not be imagined as entered except through a "gate;"[3] but in these later ages, thank God, we can think of it differently.

The streets of Beirout are almost European, though Oriental characteristics are not wanting, for there are some narrow bazaars through which it is not easy to wind one's self amidst the throng. Others are broad, with Western shops, but there are filthy caravanserais as well as elegant hotels. Barbers shave their patrons in the open air, but there are others of the profession who follow it in the seclusion of shops, on the walls of which all kinds of European advertisements may be read. One establishment, indeed, boasted in a tablet that "its proprietor has cut the hair of princes"! In the streets, the confusion of tongues makes a miniature Babel, every native of any position speaking several languages.

It would have been unpardonable to leave the East

[1] Ps. cxxvii. 5. [2] Rev. xxi. 12, 25. [3] Gen. xxviii. 17.

without taking a Turkish bath. I therefore went to one which seemed the best in the town. The entry was through a filthy passage, which led to a large dome-shaped room, with a fountain in the middle, and a daïs or platform up three high steps at one end. The floor and steps were marble, which was once in better condition than at present. A table on the daïs was the receipt of custom, where the money-taker lightened your pocket of the fee for your ablutions. A seat ran along the back, and upon this you undressed, substituting towels for clothes; then, mounted on pattens, at the risk of a disaster, you scrambled down the steps, and across to a very shabby door. Inside this, the air was equatorial, or even hotter. There was a polygonal marble ottoman in the centre, heated from below, and on this I was instructed to sit, or lie back, on a pillow, and await perspiration. To aid this beneficial result, cold water was proffered me, and I made away with two tumblerfuls. After a time, a scraggy, chocolate-coloured personage, grizzled, lean-faced, and dressed in a towel, proceeded to crack my joints, knead and twist my muscles, and lift me by my armpits, which must have been a hard job, considering our difference in weight. Finally, this tormentor left me, but not until I had been under his hands long enough to study every feature of the roof, which in the centre was lighted by an army of bull's-eyes, far from clean, with a delightfully clouded surrounding of plaster, which had not seen whitewash in the memory of the oldest inhabitant; the walls around being in excellent keeping with it.

The next step was to waddle on my pattens to a small marble-floored recess, the walls of which were in a very poor way, while there were two or three holes in the pavement. A second tormentor now appeared, and made me sit down on a block of wood on the wet, warm floor, beside

a large marble clam-shell, into which water fell, when permitted, from a tap which was stopped by a rag in the nozzle. I was now left for a time to myself, with no better occupation than to watch and keep clear of stray blackbeetles, which emerged on all sides from chinks in the wall.

The grizzled anatomy now reappeared, dressed in his towel. The block of wood was discarded, and I was laid down on the floor. Sundry small bowlfuls of hot water were then thrown over me, and next came a smart currying from head to foot with rough towels; sousings with new supplies of hot water varying the process. All this being over, while I still sat or lay on the floor, the anatomy left me for a moment, to return with a large barber's basin, in which were three pieces of brown soap and a pad of rough camels'-hair. Having made a strong lather, my hair was filled with it, and then rubbed by the attendant's hands and pad till I feared permanent baldness. To add to the pleasure, I was all this while, of course, in total darkness; my eyes firmly shut, to escape the cataract of suds pouring from above. My body then shared the same fate, as I lay, now on this, then on that side; the pad doing its best with every inch of epidermis in turn. At last, the scrubbing was over. The scraggy figure rose, stepped back, and retired, upon which I, also, rose.

But the cleaning down was yet to come off. The figure that had led me to the recess now returned, to re-conduct me from it, after my purification. Taking the soap from the huge bowl, he emptied the suds over me, and then soused me with laver after laver of hot water, till he was tired. A towel was now put round my head, two round my loins, and three round my chest and shoulders, and I was led back with painful steps to the

daïs from which I had at first descended, to dry by evaporation. This effected, I could once more don my clothes. The whole operation had taken over an hour. The charge was two francs: little enough, in all conscience. Going out, I took the wrong door, and found a crowd of native women entering at their side of the establishment, some with babies. To them, I am happy to say, the fee is only half a franc, or even less. It was pleasant to see that hatred of water was not universal.

The American Presbyterian Missions at Beirout have a world-wide fame. Begun more than fifty years ago, by men who now sleep in the quiet churchyard in the centre of their field of work, they have been quietly and efficiently continued, till Beirout has become a light to widely distant regions. Feeling that education, in the truest sense religious, from its resting on the knowledge of the Scriptures, was essential to any permanent results, they early began to use the printing-press to supply Arabic school books, and also to disseminate Christian knowledge. Year by year their primers, geographies, and other elementary school books of all kinds, have spread more widely, until they are now used in all missionary schools wherever Arabic is spoken. I met with them at the cataracts of the Nile; and, as I have already said, they are conned by dusky scholars on the Euphrates, and you find them at the Pillars of Hercules. Gradually, moreover, an Arabic Christian periodical literature has sprung up. *The Leaflet*, a weekly illustrated paper of four square pages, costing four shillings a year, circulates to the extent of 800 copies, while *The Morning Star*, a child's paper, illustrated, and published monthly, at fourpence a year for the twelve numbers, has a sale of 4,000 copies; every missionary school in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt taking some. That they can be sold so cheaply is

due to the assistance of the London Religious Tract Society, which thus does good work where one might not suspect its presence. There are, besides, text-books in Arabic, for students at the Missionary College; but the greatest triumph is the Arabic Bible, translated by one of the missionaries, and used, far and near, through the Arabic-speaking world.

The College is a fine building, a little way out of Beirout, standing in its own grounds. There is also a Medical School, the aggregate number of students being, if I remember rightly, about 200 in the two establishments. Dr. Bliss, the president of the College, gets £400 a year, without a house, rent costing him £55; Dr. Post, the president of the Medical School, gets £300 a year, without a house, and no allowance for children, though he has liberty to practise as a physician, if his profession do not interfere with College duties. He has a hospital under his charge, a very fine institution, open to all creeds and nationalities. As a rule, I was informed, missionaries do not know their salaries till they are on the ground, remuneration being treated as altogether a secondary consideration, since they come for the sake of their Master, not of the pay. "If they were men of the world," said President Bliss, "they might think about salary; as Christian soldiers, they are not on the same footing." Only the very best men are accepted for the Missions, a thing possible from the high ideal of missionary work kept before the mind of candidates. The salaries may be judged from examples. At Tripoli, the missionary, a married man, gets £185 sterling,[1] with his house-rent, £46, and £20 a year for each child till it is eighteen. A bachelor, when he keeps house, gets one third less. Other "stations" get about the same salary, some of them even

[1] £200 (Turkish). The Turkish pound is equal to 18s. 6d.

a little less. At Beirout the remuneration is £240 a year and house-rent, which varies from £50 to £90 a year, rents being very high, and houses hard to obtain. Children here, also, get £20 a year up to the age of eighteen; and medical expenses, and costs of itinerancy—undertaken for the Missions—are allowed in all "stations," as also postage, for Mission purposes. The rent in Beirout, I may say, includes that of a house in the mountains in summer, when the town is dangerous to the health of Europeans. Till lately the highest allowance for rent left the missionary, in some cases, nearly £20 out of pocket.

The results of a carefully systematic missionary system are very encouraging. An Arabic-speaking congregation of from 450 to 500 meets every Sunday in its own church, and there is a Sunday-school of 350 young people, all of them taught in Arabic by native teachers. The congregation were originally members of the Greek Church, Maronites, Druses, and Roman Catholics, while the Sunday-school children include quite a number of nationalities. At Damascus, the Arabic-speaking congregation numbers about 125, and the Sunday-school 150, a great increase in the last few years in that most bigoted city. Work among Mahommedans, as I have said more than once, is next to impossible, for if a man were to turn Christian he would have to flee. There is, hence, no progress made in gathering congregations from among them. When I was at the College, some young men, of whom I have already spoken as chosen to be interpreters to the English army in the Soudan, were on the point of starting; twenty had already gone, and twenty more were to follow. This speaks highly for the instruction given. The language used in the College is English, but Arabic is thoroughly taught. Hitherto some teachers have known only Arabic, but all will know English also from this

time forward. Candidates for the dignity of village schoolmaster have to spend three years in the preparatory school at the College, and four years in the College itself, before being thought fit for the office, though in the more simple village schools teachers are employed who have been trained in one of the "High Schools" for three years. The number of village schools connected with the Mission is 118, with 5,180 pupils.

It certainly cannot be said of native preachers that they have "hands laid suddenly on them."[1] Candidates for the office must first be tried by actual practice at a missionary station for a year or two, according to circumstances. If recommended by the missionary, they are then allowed to attend the theological department of the College for three years. This is the demand from the humblest evangelist. From those who seek a higher training, a course of three years in the preparatory school and four in the College, in all the faculties, is required; but, even then, a graduate must go, after these seven years, to a missionary, for at least another year, to see if he has the qualities needed in a preacher and pastor. One of these students was ordained, in 1855, in Jerusalem, by Bishop Hannington, since murdered in South-eastern Africa. The simplest evangelist must prove himself able to lead a congregation in prayer, "apt to teach," and his life must "become the Gospel." Above all, every agent of the Mission, high or low, must give evidence that he is absolutely sincere in his devotion to Christ and the souls of men—that is, in the current phraseology, that he is a "converted" man. The salary paid to native pastors is £5 10s. a month, with £1 a month for house-rent, but this item is not always given. Native pastors must teach at school through the week, as well as preach on Sundays and at other times. Native

[1] 1 Tim. v. 22.

teachers may be licensed to preach, but they are not ordained, and cannot administer the sacraments. Their salary is from thirty shillings to £5 a month, with house-rent in some cases, in the country. In cities, they get from £5 10s. to £6 a month, without house-rent.

A number of the graduates of the Medical School were taken for assistant-service in the English army in the Soudan; an army surgeon having been sent to examine and accept them, if they proved fit. Altogether, the Egyptian war was a fortunate thing for the young fellows, for those taken as dragomans got £15 a month; interpreters, £20 a month; and translators, £25 a month, with rations and travelling expenses. Natives, I should add, are never put in independent charge of a missionary station; they are always under white missionaries. This is a fixed rule, and a very wise one.

"Zoar," the orphanage at Beirout, is very interesting. The house was hired in 1860, after the massacre, for widows, orphans, and the sick, but it has gradually become simply a hospital and an orphanage; the former under the care of the German Protestant Knights of St. John, who support it; Protestant sisters acting as the nurses. The number of orphans exceeds 130, but twice as many could be got, if there were room and money. There is also a boarding and day school, but in all the establishment there are no servants, the orphans doing the whole of the work. There are eight sisters in the orphanage, eight in the boarding school, and five in the hospital. The wonderful intermixture of races in Beirout shows itself in an institution like this; children of eighteen nations and seventeen different forms of religion receiving their Bible lessons together in the same school. There are English, Scotch, Americans, Germans, Russians, Austrians, Swiss, Italians, Spaniards, Greeks, Turks, Syrians, Bulgarians,

Egyptians, Poles, Dutch, Hungarians, and Danes, among the girls, and they belong to the following medley of communions: Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Calvinistic, Zwinglian, Russian, Orthodox Greek, Romish Greek, Roman Catholics, Baptists, Quakers, Wesleyans, German Templars, Maronites, Jews, Mahommedans, and sometimes Druses. The good-natured sister, however, told me that "there were no quarrels, unless the Greek girls begin against the Quakers and such sects." The buildings are wonderfully clean, and everything is splendidly managed. Besides these, there are other missionary schools—those of Mrs. Watson, that of Miss Taylor, and those of the Syrian School Society—so that another generation must see great results. The Roman Catholics, also, are very active, and have great educational establishments.

A very pleasant trip to the Dog River, to see the Assyrian inscriptions on the rocks there, varied my stay at Beirout. A large party assembled to make a holiday of the little journey, and very delightful it was. Passing to the north, a long row of the humble work-cells of silk-weavers lined the street at the edge of the town; the looms being worked from the floor, in a very primitive fashion. Vast plantations of grafted mulberry-trees for the silkworms stretched away on both sides as soon as we were clear of the houses; none of the trees, I was told, were over twenty years old, silk-culture having greatly extended during that time. Cactus-hedges and stone walls alternated as fences, and water was everywhere abundant. The eggs of the silkworm are brought from the islands of the Mediterranean at twenty shillings an ounce, but this would not be necessary if proper care were taken. The people sit up night and day with the worms while they are growing, to give them a constant supply of fresh

leaves; but, strange to say, with all this watchfulness over the insect, the trees are left without the pruning and care needed to make them thoroughly good.

Three-quarters of an hour's ride brought us to the bridge which crosses the Beirout river—a stream of considerable size in winter and spring, when swollen by the rains or melting snows from the mountains, and still strong in current when I crossed it. The left side of the road, towards the bridge, is a sandy plain, stretching back some miles to the hills, and well watered. Small white houses dot it pleasantly, with gardens and orchards round them, supplying fruit and vegetables to the town. The men who work the ground live in huts made of tall grass, laid over a framework of sticks: frail houses, certainly, but good enough in such a climate, while the weather is dry. Beyond the bridge a lane edged with prickly pear led to the shore of the bay, to reach which another small stream had to be crossed, after which came a third —the Dead River—a little way up the sands. The track next led to the edge of the mountains which close in the Bay of Beirout on the north. We advanced round a projecting headland, our course lying along the remains of a Roman road which doubles this wild rocky cape, with a precipice on the one side down to the sea, while, on the other, steep cliffs rise up to the table-land above. The whole scene around and under-foot was wild and rough, for the great stones of which the road had been made 1,700 years before had apparently been left untouched ever since, and offered a honeycomb of holes and heights distressing alike to the rider and the horse. I was very much struck by the narrowness of the way, which must have been a great trouble for an army; the breadth in many places being, apparently, only ten or twelve feet. The rocks at the side were everywhere torn,

as if by successive convulsions of nature; but a few small ledges and patches of green helped here and there to brighten the weather-beaten limestone.

On the land side of this old military road, portions of the rock have been smoothed into tablets by successive conquerors or invaders; whose passing has been duly recorded on them in sculptured characters by their obedient slaves. There is a second road a little higher up the cliffs, but running parallel with the lower, and some of the inscriptions are on the one, some on the other. The first tablet in the series is a memorial left by Esarhaddon, the third and faithful son of Sennacherib, who reigned from B.C. 681 to B.C. 668, and marched along this pass in the years B.C. 672—1. A revolt of Phœnicia, a state tributary to him, had broken out, in aid of Tirhakah the Ethiopian, then reigning over Egypt—the diplomacy of the Nile having succeeded in stirring up a confederacy of Palestine against Nineveh, as it did so often in the days of the prophets. Esarhaddon was victorious, and not only crushed Tirhakah, but crossed the sea to Cyprus, whence he returned, perhaps to Tyre, and marched back to the Euphrates laden with spoil. The tablet shows a full-length life-size figure of the victor in his royal robes, and records the leading incidents of his campaign in cuneiform characters. There he stands in rich embroidery, his royal staff in one hand, the other on his sword—sadly weathered by exposure for 2,600 years, but still looking out faintly from the stone, on which, at each side and underneath, the sculptor has recorded in strange arrow-head combinations the glories of his lord. Little more than a foot from this is a square-headed tablet, over six feet high, cut by order of Rameses II., the Pharaoh of the Hebrew oppression seven centuries earlier, as a votive offering to Ptha, the god of Memphis, then in its glory, to celebrate the great

king's triumphant advance thus far against his powerful enemies, the Hittites. Esarhaddon, the conqueror of Memphis, had noted this, and evidently cut his inscription at its side in silent irony, for the ancient power of Egypt had now veiled its head to that of Nineveh.

Next comes a round-headed Assyrian tablet, cut by Sennacherib, on his invasion of Palestine in B.C. 702: that campaign in which his army was destroyed, as we read in the Bible. The great king stands before us, with his high tiara and long staff of majesty, little thinking of the humiliation awaiting him, or the death he was to die at the hand of his sons, twenty years later, in Nineveh. After this, we have another square-headed tablet of Rameses II., dedicated to the sun-god Ra. It is much the best-preserved of the various Egyptian tablets, but even in it there are only traces of the hieroglyphics which once covered it. From the others they have been entirely effaced by time. In the upper part of this, Rameses stands in adoration before a seated deity: even the Pharaoh admitting that there were higher beings than himself, though he, also, claimed kindred with the gods. Passing this, we come to an inscription left by Shalmaneser II., of Nineveh, in the year B.C. 860, when he marched to the shores of "the Sea of the West," and here raised an image of himself, as his records tell us, after receiving the homage of the kings of Phœnicia. The figure is still quite perfect, even to the elaborate ornaments of the robes; indeed, it has often been copied as a portrait. Next comes another Assyrian tablet, round-headed as usual, glorifying the majesty of Sultan Assurnazirpal, the father of Shalmaneser II., who had just closed a victorious march through Syria, in which he had received tribute from the different local states. "This image of his majesty," he tells us, he erected over against the Great Sea, offering

sacrifices and libations to his gods for the favour shown him. This was about the year B.C. 860.

Passing on, another Assyrian tablet, this time square-headed, meets us, only five feet high and half as broad, but of venerable antiquity, for it dates from the reign of Tiglath Pileser I., who was in his glory about 1,100 years before Christ, and carried the early Assyrian Empire to its highest power. This great warrior, after overcoming the Hittites at Carchemish and in Syria, marched along the coast to this part from the north, amusing himself as he did so by venturing into a "ship of the people of Arvad," in which he "rode upon the sea," and "slew a porpoise"—a deed grand enough to be commemorated in his annals. One aim he had in his advance to Beirout was, he informs us, to cut down cedars to decorate the temples of Nineveh: so early had the fame of these trees spread over Western Asia. This king was succeeded by others in whose hands Assyria for a time grew so much weaker, that David was able to found an empire extending from the sea to the Euphrates, which he could not have done had Assyria retained its vigour. A companion tablet to this one is also Assyrian, but half a century older, and very inferior to the later monuments in its execution. The figures are low and squat, and the details of decoration of the hair, beard, and dress are given with far less care than in the later Assyrian tablets. The last inscription was originally Egyptian, dating from the remote days of Rameses II., when Moses was still young: this and the two others I have already noticed of the same king being votive offerings to the gods, in gratitude for the victories which, as he fancied, they had enabled him to gain over the Hittites and Syrians. Luckily, this tablet was examined by Dr. Lepsius in 1845, while still as perfect as its great age allowed. Since then, in 1861, the French

General of Division, sent to prevent the Druses in Lebanon from continuing to massacre the Christians, thought fit to obliterate what remained of the inscription of the ancient Pharaoh and substitute a French one telling of the presence of the force sent by that evanescent dignitary the Emperor Napoleon III. This is cut into a bed of stucco and yellow paint—fit material for such a record.

These are not, however, the only inscriptions in this great gallery of old-world memories. The very intelligent Danish Consul at Beirout has discovered another, higher up the crags, left by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who twice invaded Egypt, and in one of his campaigns, as we know, carried off the Jews from Jerusalem. I saw the "squeeze" of the inscription, which is of great size, and still legible in part; but, unfortunately, it gives no historical details, simply praising the wine of Helbon, a village on the east side of the great valley of Hollow Syria, still famous for its vintage. That such a series of chronicles should be visible from almost a single point is very striking. What sights this pass had seen! The bare-limbed archers and spearmen of the haughty Pharaoh, with their shields and battle-axes, as we see them on the monuments; the long squadrons of Egyptian chariots and cavalry; proud warriors, their eyes flashing with high hopes; the music of their bands floating far out over the sea; their flags and banners fluttering in the air—now all turned, these thousands of years, to pale ghosts in the silence of eternity! Past this spot their prancing chariot-horses had borne the great Sesostris—for by that name Rameses II. was known to the Greeks—Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, Sardanapalus, and Nebuchadnezzar, clad in royal majesty, with their great men in all their bravery, before and behind, and their long myriads

of warriors! "Captains and rulers, clothed in blue, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses —clothed most gorgeously, with girdles on their loins, and dyed attire of passing splendour, great lords and renowned,"—leading on, as they rode in their glittering armour, long hosts of chariots, and warriors from many lands, with buckler and spear and helmet,[1] full of life and eager for the foe!

The bronze gates of Shalmanezer II., now in the British Museum, offer a representation of the imposing ceremonial connected with the dedication of such tablets as those of the Dog River. Priests in a group sacrifice before a statue of the Great King, erected on the shores of Lake Van. They stand at a portable altar, planted before the statue, clad in sacrificial robes, no doubt chanting some appropriate litany, while their attendants cast into the sea portions of the sheep and other victims slain as offerings to the gods. Amidst grand military display, such rites were one day witnessed before each tablet I had seen. The narrow road was widened in front of each tablet, to leave fitting space to honour the lineaments of the Mighty Ruler; but these once sacred platforms are now encumbered with wreckage from the hill above.

About half a mile from the mouth of the Dog River is a last tablet, to commemorate the cutting of what was then a lower line of road, round the cape, by Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, one of the noblest men of the ancient world, a great emperor, but also a great man, valuing truth and goodness above his imperial purple. The inscription tells us that the "Imperator, Cæsar, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Pius, the illustrious august one, [worthily surnamed] Parthicus, Britannicus, and Germanicus, the High Priest [of Rome],

[1] Ezek. xxiii. 6, 12, 23, 24.

opened this road; the mountains overhanging the river Lycus having been cut away to make it." So he, also, was here, perhaps when he went on to Jerusalem, with the squalor and abominations of which he was so disgusted that he contrasted the sordid Sarmatians, and Marcomanni, and Quadi, beyond the Danube, with the Jewish population, to the disadvantage of the posterity of Jacob. The tablet dates from a little before the year A.D. 180, when he died. A shorter inscription, nearer to the sea, and a little way further on, breathes the loyal prayer of some Roman for one whom all men so deeply honoured:—"Unconquered Imperator, Antoninus Pius, illustrious august one, reign for many years!" But he had soon to exchange his glory for a shroud!

It is from these hills of Lebanon, stretching away, height over height, from the Dog River, that the ladies come down who formerly wore long horns of metal to hold up their veils. I was not fortunate enough to see any. This strange ornament was worn by ladies of different races, but especially among the Druses, who live on the southern parts of the Lebanon range. At first these horns seem to have been of very moderate size, some, which are worn in out-of-the-way parts even now, being only a few inches long, and made of pasteboard, or even pottery. By degrees, however, they not only grew longer, but were made of more costly material; the poorest of tin, others of silver, and some even of gold. But the fashion is dying out. The "horns" so often mentioned in Scripture must not be supposed to be the same as this singular head-decoration, which, in all probability, was unknown to the Jews. That the horn is the natural symbol of strength in the lower animals, early caused it to be used as an emblem of power in any sense. "All the horns of the wicked will I cut off," says God, "but the horns of the

righteous shall be exalted."[1] "The ten horns" in Daniel are "ten kings."[2] To "defile one's horn in the dust"[3] was, hence, equivalent to being tried by adversity and humiliation. In Habakkuk the strange expression—"he had horns coming out of his hand,"[4] should be read "rays of light from his side." The "horns of the altar" were projections of metal, so called from their shape, used for binding sacrifices on the altar, as where the Psalm says, "bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar."[5]

The Dog River is a broad and rapid stream, muddy with rain when I saw it. A bridge, strangely built in steps, crosses it, but there is nothing to see on the other side except wild rocks, among which flocks of goats pick a living; the shepherd, meanwhile, quietly walking along the top of the crag, above his adventurous charge.

I paid an interesting visit with President Bliss to some caves up the Dead River, which is nearer Beirout than the Dog River. The stream flows strong and full, springs bursting up with great force at various points in its bed. A scramble along rough paths led to a wild gorge, beautiful with trees of many kinds; and in this romantic spot lay the first cave. Masses of breccia covered the floor, and huge stalactites hung down from the roof, but as we had no hammers we could do nothing to discover prehistoric remains. These, however, have been abundantly found in this cave and others in the vicinity, and carry us back to a very remote age indeed, perhaps that of the primæval inhabitants of the region. Numerous flints, worked into scrapers and knives, have been recovered in the very cave I visited; and in others, worked flints, and numerous fragments of the bones of deer, goats, cattle,

[1] Ps. lxxv. 10.
[2] Dan. viii. 20—24.
[3] Job xvi. 15.
[4] Hab. iii. 4.
[5] Ps. cxviii. 27.

and horses have been found. How far back these take us, I leave others to determine. One thing they enforce: the innumerable multitude of the dead! What ages, long forgotten, have strewn the earth with the wrecks of humanity, as the autumn of each year covers it with the fallen leaves of summer!

CHAPTER LIII.

SIDON.

FROM Beirout to Tyre and Sidon is a wearisome journey along the seashore, through miles of deep sand, round wild mountainous headlands, or beside the dashing water, which is as unpleasant to the horse as to its rider. A brief familiarity with the noise and restlessness of the waves is romantic enough, but to have them for hour after hour advancing and retiring, hissing and breaking over the only firm footing there is, is monotonous in the extreme, especially in the heat of a Syrian day, when horse exercise, at the best, is a penance. But the beauty of the neighbourhood of Sidon makes one forget such petty troubles. It lies in a green setting of gardens and orchards, watered by the grating "sakiyeh"[1] or water-wheel, slowly turning its ponderous wooden frame, raising its jars from hidden depths, and emptying them in wearisome succession into a small tank, from which the water is led off to the roots of the trees.[2] All the growths of warm climates flourish here in thick groves — pomegranates, almonds, palms, bananas, apricots, figs, olives, citrons, plums, pears, peaches, and cherries. Sidon supplies the market of Damascus with oranges, as I have had occasion to say in describing that city; for the yellow globes do not ripen in the gardens of the Syrian capital, which lies about 2,400 feet above the sea. Like all the

[1] See Vol. I., pp. 7, 8. [2] Ps. i. 3.

old Phœnician cities, the "Mother of Tyre" lay on a rocky promontory, where it enjoyed easy intercourse with the distant lands to which its commerce extended. On the north the ground slopes gently to the beach and then falls back into a small bay, a low reef stretching parallel with the shore across its mouth, thus forming a natural breakwater, inside which the smaller vessels of antiquity could ride in safety. There is also a long, narrow island, to which the population could retire in time of danger, as there was at Tyre and at some other Phœnician towns.

Sidon was the oldest city of Phœnicia,[1] and in ancient times the most famous, for Homer, who never speaks of Tyre, mentions Sidon more than once. Ulysses, speaking of Phlyus in the Peloponnesus, tells us—

"The ship-renowned Phœnicians thither came,
Knaves, bringing many trinkets in their ships.
There was a woman of Phœnicia,
In my sire's house, fair, skilled in beauteous works;
Her the Phœnicians, crafty men, deceived;
One spoke to her of love, as near the ships
She washed the vests: a thing which captivates
Weak women's minds, though prudent one may be.
He asked her who she was, and whence she came;
She told him of her father's high-roofed house:
'From Sidon, rich in brass, I boast to be,
Daughter of wealth-o'erflowing Arytas:
The Taphians seized upon me, plunderers,
As from the fields I came, and hither brought
To this man's house, and he a fit price gave.'"[2]

The fair Sidonian garments woven by Sidonian women are extolled in the *Iliad*, and the silver and other metal work of the Phœnician city is praised, as famous beyond

[1] Gen. x. 15. [2] *Odyss.*, xv. 415–429; Barnard's translation.

all other of the kind in the world.[1] The Hebrews assigned the whole district to the tribe of Asher,[2] but it never obtained the prize.[3] Sidon was taken by the Philistines about 1,200 years before Christ, and Tyre from that time became the chief Phœnician city.[4] Isaiah, however, centuries later, speaks of the merchants of Sidon,[5] and Ezekiel refers to the fame of its sailors[6] as late as the sixth century before Christ. Its timber-hewers were in great repute in the time of Solomon,[7] and in that of Ezra,[8] so that, although Tyre was still greater, Sidon continued to flourish. The "coasts of Tyre and Sidon" visited by our Lord were in all probability the plain, scarcely five miles broad at Sidon, on which these two cities stood,[9] so that He was very near the great heathen centres. Nor was Sidon, in its turn, without a band of Christian converts, even in the time of St. Paul; for the great Apostle, when he "touched at" it as a prisoner on his way to Rome, was "courteously" allowed "liberty to go unto his friends" there, "to refresh himself."[10]

During the two Crusading centuries, Sidon was in the hands of the Christians several times, once for seventy-five years, but in A.D. 1291 it finally passed into the possession of the Mahommedans; and whatever life it now shows is only a gradual revival, the result of Christian energy and industry, especially on the part of the French, who were finally driven from it less than 100 years ago. The population is about 10,000, of whom 7,000 are Moslems and Metawilehs, 700 Jews, and

[1] *Iliad*, xxiii. 741 ff.
[2] Josh. xix. 28.
[3] Judg. i. 31; iii. 3; x. 12; Jos. *Ant.*, xv. 4, 1.
[4] Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, iii. 347.
[5] Isa. xxiii. 2.
[6] Ezek. xxvii. 8.
[7] 1 Kings v. 6; 1 Chron. xxii. 4.
[8] Ezra iii. 7.
[9] Matt. xv. 21; Mark vii. 24.
[10] Acts xxvii. 3.

the rest Christians of different sects. The Franciscans, who are very strong in Palestine, have a large monastery here, watched, as usual, by the Jesuits, to whom their liberality of mind is hateful—a Jesuit school supplying an agency for keeping the monks under supervision. There is also a Roman Catholic orphanage, and a school of the Sisters of St. Joseph; and the Americans have a missionary station, as efficient and well managed as one could well desire.

The streets are narrow, crooked, and dirty, like those of other Oriental towns, but many of the houses are of stone—large and well built, especially those raised on the eastern wall; their positions giving them pure air and a pleasant view. There are six khans in the town, one of them—formerly belonging to the French—a large quadrangle, with a fountain in the middle of its hollow square, and covered galleries all round. A great four-square tower, very ruinous, but still forming the citadel, stands in the southern quarter, on the highest ground: a relic of the Crusaders. From its top the view is very fine. The town stretches out at one's feet, on its gentle slope, the boundless sea reaching away to the west, while the lovely plain on all sides of the town is set off with groves, gardens, houses, and villages, and far away to the north rise the snow-crowned tops of Lebanon.

Spring is very beautiful in this part, but it is not always to be counted upon. Heavy rain-storms sometimes fall as late as May, and the mountain-tops occasionally show fresh snow even in that month. This uncertainty is very hurtful to the crops, which, consequently, fail more frequently in Syria and Palestine, from untimely frosts, than in many other lands; from this fatality silk enjoys no exemption. The Hebrews were, therefore, in an especial degree, led to think of the need of Divine favour to give

them harvests, everything depending so entirely on the heavens. The want of rain, its too long continuance, its coming at wrong times, the irruption of winter into spring, not to speak of dangers from insect plagues, have indeed, in all ages, forced the population, of whatever creed, to an outward religiousness of fear or selfishness; and this, in our day, occasionally makes Moslems, Christians, and Jews lay aside their fierce dislikes for the moment, and unite in fasts, processions, and prayers for the pity of the All-merciful on the drooping field.

In Sidon, as elsewhere in the East, sacred mottoes are to be seen on the outside of some of the houses. In certain cases interlaced Arabic letters, comprising verses from the Koran, form an ornament similar to our cornices, round the walls of a room, and many houses have inscriptions over the door. This custom prevails in every Mahommedan country, and is so natural in those who honour a special book as sacred that it has held a place among widely-separate peoples in every age. We, ourselves, in the first generations after the Reformation, especially in Scotland, put pious mottoes from Scripture over our house-doors, as may still be seen in old buildings in Edinburgh and Glasgow; and in the same way I found the walls of the rambling mud-brick house of the Christian sheikh of Luxor, in Upper Egypt, ornamented with Bible mottoes in Arabic. It was in accordance with this instinctive propensity that Moses told the people of Israel, "These words which I have commanded thee this day, thou shalt write upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."[1] Just as sentences of the Koran are framed and hung as pictures on the walls of Moslem houses to-day, so we find passages from the Law on the dwellings of Oriental Jews. They, further, nail to their door-posts a

[1] Deut. vi. 9; xi. 20.

small tin or lead case, or a glass tube, or "mezuzah." In this there is a piece of vellum about three inches square, with the words of Deuteronomy vi. 4—9, and xi. 13—21, written on one side with great care, the vellum being afterwards folded to about half an inch wide, with the writing inside, and the word Shaddai, one of the names of the Almighty, on the back, a hole being left in the case, through which this can be seen in passing. Thus complete, the "mezuzah," a name meaning simply a door-post, is nailed in a slanting position on the right-hand side of the outer door; another, exactly similar, being fixed, in the same way, at the side of every door within. A pious Jew never goes out to his day's work without kissing the "mezuzah," and seldom passes from room to room without bowing to it; and if he removes to another house, he takes it with him, unless a Jew is to succeed him in the tenancy.

The phylacteries which the Pharisees "made broad"[1] were two little boxes of leather, which contained, written on strips of vellum, the words of Exodus xiii. 2—10, 11—17, and Deuteronomy vi. 4—9, 13—22. To this box were attached leather bands which could be made broader or narrower, and by these, one of the boxes was tied to the left arm, at the bend of the elbow, and the other put on the forehead. The breadth of the phylacteries used by the Pharisees referred to the thongs, and to the little boxes themselves: the greater size and width being used to attract attention. In our Lord's day, such things were worn by all Jews, boys being required to use them when they were thirteen years and a day old, after which they were regarded as "sons of the commandments." When phylacteries were introduced is not clearly known, but it is thought that they came into fashion during the

[1] Matt. xxiii. 5.

exile, as a literal compliance with the command to bind the Law, "for a sign, upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes," just as the "mezuzah" is a fulfilment of the injunction to "write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."[1]

Sidon, like Tyre, was famous from the earliest ages for its dye-works, which produced the purple so much esteemed by the ancients. This was obtained from two species of shell-fish of the family known as *murex*—shells with rough points outside and a spindle-like prolongation at the upper end. The secretion which yields the dye varies in shade in different species. Originally whitish, it grows, when exposed to sunlight, first yellow, then green, and finally, in the different molluscs, red, or violet-purple. The abundance of these valuable shell-fish on the Phœnician coast led to the founding of Dora, and there, as at Tyre and Sidon, although they are now virtually extinct in the shallow water, whole masses of them are, at times, thrown up from the sea, after storms. From the earliest ages the smoke of the dye-works of Tyre and Sidon must have been seen from the hills behind, curling up into the clear sky; and the sight must have been familiar to the Jews, and to the Divine Child of Nazareth.

There are not many antiquities in Sidon, wave after wave of conquest having swept away most traces of the remote past. Tombs abound in the plain and on the sides of the hills behind the town; some of them with many chambers for the dead, like the so-called Tombs of the Kings at Jerusalem. I have often wondered at the bare and comfortless walls of these rock-cells in the Holy City, so different from the pictured beauty with which the Egyptians delighted to adorn their last resting-places; but the abhorrence among the Jews of representations of living

[1] Deut. vi. 8, 9.

creatures, or of the human figure, may in part account for it. Here, at Sidon, however, many tombs were coated with strong cement, in the Greek age at least, and on this are still to be seen inscriptions, sometimes written with a sharp point before the stucco was dry; sometimes added in red ink after the wall was hardened. Wreaths of flowers, small birds, and palm, orange, and various other fruit-trees, are met in one or the other, showing that the locality was very much the same in old times as it is now. Oranges and citrons, by the way, first became familiar to the Hebrews during the exile, the native homes of these trees being Media and Persia, where many Jews were settled. It is hard to say where there are not tombs round Sidon, for the whole ground seems to be honeycombed with them, though a great many are now covered with soil, and only found by accident. At the north-west angle of the harbour are some immense stones, each about ten feet square, the remains of ancient quays and sea-walls. The castle, of which I have already spoken, is very interesting. Part of it is nearly solid, with granite pillars built into the wall at regular distances; these buttresses being part of the wreck of ancient mansions, public buildings, and temples. The bevelled edge in masonry was formerly thought to imply antiquity, but I have before remarked that it is now found to characterise later work as well as earlier, so that its presence here proves nothing as to the age of the building. Columns, sarcophagi, broken statues, and other remains of the ancient city are often to be seen in gardens and orchards; not a few have been dug up from beneath many feet of soil, as similar relics of the long past are excavated at Ascalon.

That so little stone is to be seen where a large city once stood, is at once explained by the custom of carrying off the remains of antiquity as building materials for

modern edifices. The houses of to-day in the cities of Palestine are largely built, as I have often said, from the stones of cities long deserted. Not a little of that used for ancient buildings was, moreover, soft, and though lasting enough when duly protected, crumbled to soil when left exposed to the weather. A great trade is done in calcining the ruins of ancient towns, where they are calcareous. Huge marble pillars are ruthlessly broken up for this purpose, and many sarcophagi, and even statues, have shared the same fate.

Buried treasures are not unfrequently found in the neighbourhood of Sidon, and the number of ancient coins in circulation, here and elsewhere, through Palestine and Syria is wonderful, though many of them are of little value. The most famous discovery, for value and interest, took place about fifty years ago, when some workmen, as they were digging, found a number of copper jars full of gold coins of Alexander the Great and his father Philip, each worth more than a sovereign. How they came there it is of course impossible to say, but they must have been hidden from the time of the Macedonian world-conqueror, 2,200 years ago. In Beirout, the Danish Consul showed me a collection of coins made by himself, numbering many hundreds, for every city had its own coinage. The extreme poverty of most Orientals generates a superstitious reverence for money, and this is increased by the possibility that any spot may conceal stores large enough to make a man permanently rich. Hence the least suspicion of the existence of a hoard creates an excitement which we can hardly realise. The finding of a single coin may be enough to rouse the hope of "hidden treasure," and to lead to the most eager toil, in every direction, to find it. Indeed, treasure-seekers abound all over the country. This helps one to understand Job's expression

about those in trouble who "dig for death more than for hid treasures,"[1] and the words of Proverbs, "If thou seekest her [understanding] as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."[2] Nor is it only in modern times that such treasures have been found, as indeed these verses show: in the Gospels our Lord alludes to "treasure hid in a field, the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."[3]

The greatest discovery ever made at Sidon, however, was not a hoard of coin, but the sarcophagus of Esmunazar, "King of the Sidonians," who lived in the fourth century before Christ. It was found, by the merest accident, not in a tomb or mausoleum, but almost on the open ground, in a field close to the town. How it got there is a mystery, for the Phœnicians took immense pains to make the tombs of their dead secure. Thus, at Tyre, they dug a shaft large enough to let down the coffin or sarcophagus into a spacious tomb below, and the small opening overhead was so carefully concealed that it is very difficult to find one, even now. At Sidon, the rock was cut away to make a large level space, now used as the threshing-floor for the neighbourhood. Underneath this, however, reached by square shafts like those at Tyre, are countless tombs, opening, in many cases, from chamber to chamber, over a large space, according to the wealth of the family to which they first belonged, and the number who would need a resting-place in this last home. In many cases, still further precautions were taken, by laying down a special floor of large stones, or by cutting a deep trench in the floor and hiding away the sarcophagus in it, after-

[1] Job iii. 21. [2] Prov. ii. 4. [3] Matt. xiii. 44.

wards smoothing the surface above with coats of cement, as if all underneath were solid. To tap the threshing-floor at almost any point thus leads down to a wide-branching city of death, hidden in utter darkness. But, indeed, it has been tapped long before our day, in the eager search after the wealth supposed to be buried with the dead.

In January, 1855, the French Consul at Beirout heard of the discovery at Sidon of a wonderful sarcophagus of hard black basalt, finely polished, and instantly took measures to secure it for his nation. A long inscription on its lid, in an unknown character, heightened the general excitement, till all the town went out to see it. The lid is peculiar from its imitation of the Egyptian custom of having the upper end wrought into a likeness of the deceased; the head-dress, too, being quite unusual. The face is larger than life, with a rather low forehead, almond-shaped, projecting eyes, a broad, flat nose, thick negro-like lips, a small chin, and large ears standing out somewhat from the head. But there is nothing unpleasant in the countenance on the whole, for a smile plays over it and redeems it from plainness. A beard, like that seen on Egyptian coffins, hangs from the chin—a false one, as was usual in the valley of the Nile—and a bird, perhaps a dove, sits on each shoulder. The proportions of the lid—seven feet by four—do not admit of elegance in the figure, the whole surface being covered with it, contrary to all requirements of symmetry. The inscription occupies twenty-two lines, which are in perfect preservation. Such a relic of Phœnicia created as great a stir as that caused, at a later day, by the Moabite stone; no fewer than forty scholars having, since its discovery, made translations of the invaluable text which it supplies. The following is mainly the version of Professor Oppert and that of Renan, the last published:—

"In the month of Bul,[1] in the fourteenth year of the reign of King Esmunazar, king of the Sidonians, son of King Tabnit, king of the Sidonians, King Esmunazar, king of the Sidonians, spoke, saying:

"I am snatched away before my time;[2] my spirit has disappeared like the day [which dies into night], and since then I am silent, since then I became mute, and I am lying in this coffin, and in this tomb, the place which I have built.

"O Reader! I adjure everyone, either of royal race or of lower birth, not to open my sepulchre to seek after treasures, for there are none hidden here with me; let no one move my coffin out of its place, nor disturb me in this my last bed, by laying another coffin over mine. If men command thee to do so, do not listen to them, for the punishment [of the violators of my grave] shall be: Every man of royal race, or of common birth, who shall open this sarcophagus, or who shall carry it away, or shall disturb me in it, he shall have no burial with the dead, he shall not be laid in a tomb, nor leave behind him any son or posterity, for the holy gods will extirpate them.

"Thou, whoever [thou art, who mayest] be king [after me], command those over whom thou mayest reign to cut off any, whether members of the royal race, or common men, who remove the lid of this sarcophagus, or take it away; command them, also, to cut off even the offspring of such men, whether royal or common.[3]

"Let there be no root to them, to strike downwards; no fruit to shoot upwards, nor any living being [to perpetuate their memory] under the sun.

[1] We cannot tell whether this was in the flowery spring or in the glowing sun-scorched autumn.

[2] Deutsch.

[3] Renan renders this—"they, the gods, shall cut off any . . . they shall cut off even the offspring."

"For I am to be pitied—snatched away before my time—the son of the flood of days, disappearing like the light, from the time I became voiceless and silent.

"For I, Esmunazar, king of the Sidonians, son of King Tabnit, king of the Sidonians, [who was] the grandson of King Esmunazar, king of the Sidonians:

"And my mother Amastarte, the priestess of Astarte, our mistress, the Queen, the daughter of King Esmunazar, king of the Sidonians:

"It was we who built the temple of the gods, and the temple of Ashtaroth, in the seaside Sidon, and placed there the image of the Ashtaroth, and we built the temple of Eshmun.

"And it was we who built the temples of the gods of the Sidonians, in the seaside Sidon—the temple of Baal of Sidon, and the temple of Astarte, who bears the name of this Baal[1] [that is, Astarte Peni Baal].

"The lord of kings gave us Dora and Joppa [towns on the coast of the plain of Sharon], with the fertile corn lands in the plain of Sharon, and added it to the territory of our land, that it may belong to the Sidonians for ever.

"O Reader! I adjure every man of royal race, and every common man, not to open my coffin, or deface [the inscriptions on] its lid, or disturb me in this my last bed, or carry away the sarcophagus in which I rest.

"Whoever does, let the holy gods extirpate them and their offspring for ever, whether they be of royal race or men of the common crowd!"

Thus we stand, for the moment, in this glimpse into long-dead ages, face to face with men to whom Baal and Astarte were supreme in heaven and on earth. Dora

[1] All Phœnician gods were Baal, and all goddesses Astarte.

and Joppa, also, live before us, with their moving life of more than two thousand years ago; and Sharon waves, then as now, with yellow grain, the reward of the patient husbandman. Poor Esmunazar's dread of being disturbed in his tomb was not unfounded, and shows how ancient must have been the practice of rifling tombs for "hidden treasures." Who first violated his last home, so carefully guarded, so surrounded with ghostly imprecations against disturbers, no one can tell, for his sarcophagus had lain under a thin coating of garden soil, having been buried for ages, before a happy accident brought it to light. It is very singular, however, to trace the subsequent history of this violation of the grave. The Duke de Luynes, who bought the sarcophagus and presented it to the French Government, fell in Italy, in the war with Austria, in 1859; and there, also, his only son perished. The Emperor Napoleon, who caused it to be brought to Paris, ended his days a discrowned exile, in England, and his only son met an untimely death in South Africa; nor is there a single descendant left of either the Duke de Luynes or Napoleon III.[1] I do not mean to suggest that the imprecations of the long-dead Sidonian king brought about this singular fatality, but the coincidence is one of the strangest of which I know.

The gardens of Sidon reach more than a mile to the south, ending at the bed of a broad winter-torrent, the flat bottom of which is piled with boulders of all sizes, in great numbers. A mile further on is the small stream Sanik, and at about five miles from Sidon you reach the small river Zaherany, once crossed by a bridge which has long since fallen, and, of course, has never been rebuilt. The road or track passes along the edge of the uplands bordering the sea, on which it looks down from a height

[1] Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, ii. 362.

of twenty or twenty-five feet. About a mile back, there is a striking gorge, with a village at its opening, and a ruined temple on a spur of rock above it. The hills around show, moreover, that a great population once lived near, their sides being everywhere hollowed into tombs, one of which is so large that it is sometimes used for religious worship. This spot was famous in early days for the great engineering works by which it was made to contribute a water-supply to Sidon. Far up among the mountains towering to the north and east, the Zaherany bursts from the rocks in a copious spring, known as the Fountain of the Cup. The cold pure water of this stream had charms for the Sidonians such as can appeal only to the people of a hot climate. They determined, therefore, to take advantage of it, and for this purpose had an aqueduct led, at some parts in rock-cut channels, at others in strongly-built conduits, from the far-away spring to the lowly bed of the Sanik, in the plains far below, whence it was easily brought to the city. The water-course was, in part, carried on high arches over deep glens, then, down and ever down for more than a mile, along the face of precipices where goats can hardly find a footing, till it reached the torrent-bed. In some places, indeed, two separate aqueducts were built, one over the other. Such a display of skill speaks highly for the civilisation of ancient Phœnicia in directions we should not otherwise have suspected. The world was not so far behind us in those distant ages as we are apt, in our vanity, to suppose. Perhaps, indeed, it was in some respects in advance of us.

CHAPTER LIV.

SAREPTA AND TYRE.

The bed of the Zaherany is bright with a thick fringe of oleanders, which relieves the monotony of the road now that the gardens of Sidon are passed. Numerous wadys cut up the sand and run back into the hills, water flowing in at least one of them, and making its banks rejoice in orchards of oranges, peaches, pomegranates, and other fruit-trees. The memorable site of Sarepta lies only a short way farther on, and is reached through a pleasant and comparatively fertile neighbourhood. Herds of oxen and flocks of goats pasture here and there, and the soil is more or less fertile with crops. But agriculture at this spot, as elsewhere in the East, is very primitive. The only process before sowing is the ploughing of the ground with the wretched implements characteristic of the whole of Western Asia, half an acre a day being the most that ordinary labour can scratch into nominal furrows and then sow over. There is no harrowing, nor does it seem there ever has been, for the word rendered "to harrow," in the Bible, seems rather to mean a breaking of the clods with mallets, as is still occasionally done. The plough covers the seed, which is then left to Providence. The weakness of the coulter and other parts of the plough requires, moreover, that advantage be taken, in all but the most friable soils, of the softening of the surface by the winter or spring rains; so that the peasant, if industrious, has to

"plough in the winter,"[1] though sluggards still shrink from its cold, and have "to beg in the harvest."

The ruins of Sarepta are scattered over the plain, at intervals, for more than a mile: one group is on the coast, and may be the remains of the ancient harbour. These lie on a tongue of land which forms a small bay and pleasantly varies the monotony of the otherwise unbroken coast-line. Fine crops brighten part of the plain around, though only the small village of Surafend, the modern representative of the ancient town, is actually surrounded by green. Sarepta was famous for its wine in the early Christian centuries, but it got its name in the Hebrew Bible—Zarpath—from its being in still older days a chief centre of the glass-works of Phœnicia—the word meaning "melting-houses." It belonged to the territory of Sidon,[2] and must have been a large place, if we may judge from the number of rock-tombs at the foot of the hills.

Its supreme interest, however, to all Bible readers lies in its connection with the great Prophet Elijah. A place is still shown at the old harbour where a Christian church once stood, on the alleged site of the widow's house in which the prophet lived. But no value is to be attached to such a localisation, though the spot is still called "the Grave of Elijah," in the belief that he finally died here. There is no end to such traditions, spun in dreamy brains.

During the reign of the Crusaders, Sarepta was strongly fortified, and made the seat of a bishop, who was subject to the Archbishop of Sidon; but as early as the end of the thirteenth century it had sunk into utter desolation. Legend has tried to identify it with the home of the Syrophœnician woman whose daughter Christ healed, but there is no ground for this fancy. Its fame must always rest, for Christians, on the noble lesson of faith in God

[1] Prov. xx. 4. [2] 1 Kings xvii. 9; Luke iv. 26.

taught by the prophet on the one hand, and by the great-hearted widow on the other.

Riding south, towards Tyre, one sees some villages on the bluffs behind, but none on the plain, which does not offer the same security. Yet the landscape was once dotted with rich villas, for fragments of mosaic pavements, with finely-hewn stones, are still found. Patches of barley and wheat vary the level, and the yellow bluffs of rock also are frequently set off with green. It was strange to notice the solitude of the waters, once busy with the restless coasting and foreign trade of Phœnicia. The peasants have no boats, and no wish for them, avoiding the shore rather than coming near it. A stream called the Aswad runs into the sea a few miles south of Sarepta, with a safe ford at one spot, but dangerous at its mouth, on account of quicksands, which give way under man or beast if inadvertently stepped upon. The central arch of an ancient bridge spans the channel, but the approaches on both sides have long since disappeared, so that it is of no use.

The great river Leontes, known at this point as the Kasimieh, but along all the rest of the course as the Litany, pours into the sea about half-way between Sarepta and Tyre. Its course, including its many windings, is in all about 120 miles, in passing over which it descends fully 4,000 feet, from its highest source in Lebanon. It rises close to the source of the Orontes, in the broad plain of Hollow Syria, near Baalbek—its farthest, not its highest, permanent source being there. We crossed it, as may be remembered, at Shtorah, on the way to Beirout, and from that point it flows south-west, through the Lebanon mountains, fighting, most of the way, through a narrow chasm worn by its waters in the course of ages. Leaping from point to

point, "it boils, it wheels, it foams, it thunders" on, at one place making its way through a tunnel, cut by it in a rock more than ninety feet thick, so as to form a natural bridge. At some places it is hardly more than six feet wide, but the depth is unknown. At others it rushes down in furious madness 600 or even 800 feet beneath your standing-place, till, at last, flowing almost at a right angle with its original course, it bursts from the grip of the hills and seeks rest in the ocean, to which it makes its way with many windings, between banks thick with rich overhanging green. Its current is swift, and it is too cold for bathing, except during the hot months, coming as it does from the snows of Lebanon. The low plain which it crosses is unhealthy, else one would expect to find a town at its mouth, for the fishing off the coast here is the best in this part of Syria. Yet, without doubt, the whole neighbourhood was once thickly inhabited, proofs of its having been so presenting themselves in scattered ruins on every side. The view of Mount Hermon from this point is peculiarly grand. North and south its gigantic mass rises, covered on its long ridge with unstained snow; the middle somewhat lower than the two ends, but its majesty, as a whole, impressive beyond words.

As we approached Tyre, we passed some files of camels laden in most cases with merchandise, which they were slowly carrying north. On the humps of some, however, were women and children, swaying backward and forward unceasingly with the painful gait of the animal; but natives are so accustomed to this twisting and rocking that they do not feel it. Indeed, children even imitate it when learning by heart their lessons from the Koran in their rude schools, on the floor of which the little creatures rock to and fro all the time they are at their task. The Arabs are, happily, little known in this part,

but their evil reputation is universal. Stories abound of their robbing travellers when they have a chance. One case I heard, of a poor European being set upon by fourteen of them, robbed of his knapsack, wounded on the head, and turned adrift, after being stripped quite naked: a strange repetition of the story of the man who fell among thieves on the way to Jericho. It is, in fact, unsafe to go through any Arab district without the protection of companions. Ishmael is the same to-day as four thousand years ago; a wild man, with his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him.

Tyre is now a small and wretched place, with the pretence of a bazaar, in which beans, tobacco, dates, and lemons are the chief articles for sale. The American Consul, a great man in the town, is a native. A collection of miserable houses, of one or two storeys, with filthy lanes for streets, forms all that now calls itself Tyre. It lies on what was once the famous island-site of the ancient city. Alexander the Great, however, unable to reach it otherwise, built a mole to connect it with the mainland; stones and rubbish being thrown into the strait between it and the shore till a broad road rose above the waters; and this has been so widened by the sand, in the course of ages, that it is now about half a mile across. There were originally two islands, connected, in Phœnician times, by a mound; so that it is hard to restore the ancient topography, now that mainland and islands are run into one. Along the sea face, the rocks are rugged and picturesque, rising, towards the south, thirty or forty feet above the sea, and cut out at many points, by the ancient population, with great patience and ingenuity, into a series of small harbours, landing-places for boats, shallow docks, and salt-pans. The whole length of the site, including all its parts, is only about 1,200 yards

from north to south, and about a third less from east to west, so that the Tyrians must have been wonderfully crowded if the city on the mainland did not give room enough for comfort; for the island was, doubtless, in great part covered with tall warehouses, landing-wharves, sailors' barracks, and all the other accessories of a huge commerce.

It is impossible, now, to trace the docks in which the great Tarshish ships lay safe from the winds, for the sea and man have long since removed nearly all remains of the past; but there are still two small bays, one on the north and the other on the south, which were part of the harbourage. Along the whole sea face, to the west, and indeed everywhere, are seen fragments of fortifications dating from the time of the Crusaders; and pillars of granite and syenite taken by them from ancient temples or public buildings, for binding the wall, now lie, sometimes in numbers, on the sand and the rocks. At low water, moreover, remains of ancient concrete pavement are to be seen, full of bits of pottery, smoothing the roughness of the ledge, and enabling boats to land safely. There are still some remains of a mole, and at the very north of the island a stone nearly seventeen feet long, and six and a half feet thick, still shows the splendour of the sea-wall of Old Tyre thousands of years ago. In one place nearly twenty great pillars, two feet in diameter, lie in the water together, black externally, but seen to be of fine pink granite when chipped. The harbours, however, are now entirely sanded up. Even small boats cannot enter, but must anchor outside, half-naked men carrying the cargo out on their heads, through the shallows.

The present town occupies only a small portion of the peninsula. Everywhere the ground is covered with fragments of stone pillars and masonry. Nor is the surface

alone thus rich. The space east of the town is used as a quarry, excellent building-stones being found at a depth of fifteen or twenty feet, and occasionally coins and gems, once dear enough to their owners. Altogether, the area of the islands is about 200 acres, but when we remember that Byblos occupied only 100 acres, and Sidon not much more, the space covered by insular Tyre is seen to have been beyond that common in ancient Phœnician cities. What might not be found if excavations sufficiently deep were made in this narrow field?

The grandeur of ancient Tyre is hard to realise when on the actual site, the space being in every way so limited. The docks of London cover twice as much space as the whole of the ancient Phœnician capital, while of its two harbours, the northern only occupies twelve acres, and the southern about the same. Nor do there seem ever to have been works connecting the different parts of the two reefs which run north and south beyond both these ports, though the existence of the rocks was evidently the cause of Tyre being built where it was, for the sake of the safe anchorage obtained behind them, from whatever quarter the wind might blow. We must therefore understand the descriptions of the mercantile marine of the great city by a local standard suited to a remote age. Tarshish ships may have been in some cases large and splendid, but these must have been comparatively few in number, for there was no room at Tyre or Sidon even for the shipping of towns like Dundee or Aberdeen, while a single dock on the Thames would hold a greater number of vessels, of immensely greater tonnage, than could have found moorage in Tyre and Sidon together. What justly seemed wonderful to early antiquity would in our day be reckoned almost insignificant: a fact which must not be forgotten in reading the description of Tyre by the Prophet Ezekiel,

The site of Tyre may be compared to a short-stemmed key with the wards turned to the north; the barrel broadening out cone-like towards the straight general line of the coast. Remains of the wall built along the edges of the key-head still remain, showing that it once ran round the whole extent, looking down on the sea-edge, over the waves which beat ceaselessly, twenty to thirty feet below, on the countless rocks that fringe the shore. Between this old fortification and the modern town lies an open space on the south side, used as a quarry, but it is also, in part, ploughed and sown; in part used as a cemetery. At the south-east corner of the wall, close to the point from which an ancient mole ran out at an acute angle from the shore, stand the ruins of a Crusading castle, now in a garden. Not far from it are the remains of the Christian Cathedral, in which the mailed warriors of Europe worshipped our Lord, apparently on the site of the once famous Temple of Melcarth, the patron god of Tyre.

Of the ancient industries of Tyre—the glass factories and dye works, once so noted—the only traces remaining are fragments of glass, which have become consolidated into a hard mass with the sand of the rocky slopes, and thick layers of crushed shells of the murex, which, having yielded the famous purple, were cast out near the town. The ruins of the Cathedral are, in fact, the most striking feature of the place; for a mass of architecture so huge, raised by our fellow-Christians in such a distant spot, fills the mind with wonder. The choir, with its side-chambers, is still to be seen, and even the remains of a winding stair, by which, apparently, access was gained to the Cathedral tower. The walls of the church are from fifteen to thirty feet thick, and two huge granite pillars still remaining show that its interior decorations must have been magnificent. They remain where they are, in

fact, only because they are too heavy for the Turk to remove them.

The glory of Tyre has long since sunk beneath the waters. Splendid, according to Eastern ideas, even in the time of the Crusades, it was wholly deserted after the destruction of the Christian kingdom, till within, comparatively speaking, a few years back. The Metawilehs, who have latterly settled in it, have raised it once more to a place of human habitation; but it is still very poor and wretched, with little or no trade, harbours filled up and useless, and poor communications with the interior or the coast towns.

Ezekiel's prophecy[1] has, indeed, been fulfilled, for the fisherman spreads his nets on the reefs and ruined walls, and the once famous queen city is now only a fishing village, with a small coasting trade in cereals, fruit, and silk. Water is supplied by a fountain which was originally in the interior of the island, but is now, of course, apparently on the mainland, since the island has for ages been joined to the shore. The dip of the rocks from the hills, fortunately for the ancient Tyrians, enabled a vigorous subterranean streamlet to send its waters under the sea to the rock constituting the island, and, there, an equally fortunate crack brought them to the surface, in a never-failing supply. It was through this that the island city was able to stand the long sieges it endured, for it never seems to have been troubled by want of water.

As one stands amidst the squalor that now reigns, the imagination has food enough, assuredly, for dreams of the past! Eleven hundred years before Christ the silent space around was busy with many-coloured life and industry: the capital of the Dutch of the ancient world. "Old Tyre" stretched back over the plain; insular Tyre—a

[1] Ezek. xxvii.

small Liverpool—crowded itself, as it best could, on this reef. Architecture and ship-building among the Tyrians had already in the time of Solomon become so famous, that he borrowed from them the skill which built his Temple, carved its roofs, and doors, and walls, made its metal-work of all kinds, and built his ships. Sailing in the night by the stars is said to have been a result of their thoughtful study of navigation. From this little island they visited not only all the coasts of the Mediterranean, but fetched tin from Cornwall and amber from the Baltic. Gades, the Spanish Cadiz of to-day, was a Tyrian colony, and so was Carthage, in Africa; and there were lesser settlements in many parts of the world. The enterprising islanders, however, seem to have been as hateful oppressors as their children at Carthage, who finally perished, as a state, because of their tyranny over their neighbours. Tyre must, like that city, have been a hateful, cruel despot over the towns in the vicinity subject to her; for as early as the reign of the Assyrian, Shalmaneser III., the besieger of Samaria, all the Phœnician communities of Palestine, including even Old Tyre, on the mainland, put their flotilla at the service of the invader, to crush the island city. But her navy was too skilfully managed to be defeated, twelve of her ships driving off sixty sent against her by the allies, and bringing a siege of five years to a conclusion glorious for the defenders. Nor was Nebuchadnezzar able to take the haughty island, though he tried his best against it for thirteen years together, his battalions striving year after year, till, to use the words of Ezekiel, "every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled," but all for "no wages,"[1] the flag of Tyre waving proudly to the end! Under the Persians, who succeeded the Babylonians, the glory of Tyre, in keeping with the prophecies, was sadly

[1] Ezek. xxix. 18.

dimmed; but she remained a powerful town for some centuries longer, able to resist even Alexander the Great, in B.C. 332, for seven months. Her story, indeed, for ages, has been only a slow dying, with intervals of recovery, followed by relapses into a lower position, till the place has become what we see it to-day.

CHAPTER LV.

CONCLUSION.

After a journey over Palestine in every direction it is natural to contrast the present with the past. That the land was once very much more fruitful than it is now admits of no doubt. But could it at any time have been fertile, as a whole, according to Western ideas? It could, but only where water was plentiful. The plain of the Jordan, that of Shechem, Esdraelon, and similar level spaces, easily irrigated by springs breaking out at the foot of the neighbouring hills, must, in all ages, have been exceedingly rich, and so must any other parts where the vital necessity, moisture, could be readily obtained. Round Cæsarea-Philippi, and at Dan, or along the valley of the Huleh, or in the little plain of Gennesaret, the country must always have been like the garden of the Lord. But it was different with the hills which cover so much of the land. Where springs sparkled down them, there would be abundance, but everywhere else the collection of rain-water in wells must have been the one resource for summer irrigation. That Palestine, in such districts, has always been waterless, is shown by the thousands of rain-pits dug in ancient times, and still remaining. The stores gathered in these might water the terraces painfully made along the hill-sides, but only after hard and constant labour; nor would they suffice if not supplemented by copious

rains in autumn and spring. Drought would, indeed, cut off all hope, for in that case the rain-pits would be empty.

The hills of Southern Palestine, moreover, are incredibly barren; like a brain-coral, as I have said, with its numberless seams fretting the bulges of grey limestone. Industry, in a warm climate, does wonders with vegetation, if there be water; but to terrace these stony hills must have been infinitely harder work than to clear a far larger space of "bush" in Canada, and open rich virgin soil to the sun. Terraces, moreover, could only offer narrow banks for culture along the rounded slopes, and there must have been large districts in which no terracing could have repaid the husbandman, amidst such a bare and awful wilderness of rock. The amazing stoniness of the soil in very many parts, also, must have limited fruitfulness, for it seems as if stones had been rained down over most of Palestine. I have been in many countries, but I never saw anything similar, except perhaps some parts of Nova Scotia or of Dartmoor. The ground can in fact hardly be seen, in not a few localities, for the boulders and stony wreck strewn over it.

I cannot, therefore, suppose that even in its best ages the Promised Land was one of which, as a whole, a Western people would have thought much, however fertile it might be in parts. The praise of it in the Bible must, I apprehend, be understood by an Oriental standard, which regards any country as a paradise where, even in parts, there are living springs and green plains. Small things are always great by comparison. Alongside the thirsty desert Palestine was a dream of delight; compared with a country like England, or any rich European or American state, it seems very poor indeed. There is immeasurably more beauty and fertility in a single English county like Kent than in all Palestine, including its best spots.

Indeed, Kent is too large for a fair comparison. Its sixty-five miles of width, and forty of depth from north to south, give it too great an advantage, against so small a country as Palestine, which is only 140 miles from Dan to Beersheba, and does not average anything like forty miles in its breadth. A much smaller county would hold its own against all the Holy Land, though the climate in Palestine stimulates vegetation so wonderfully that even barrenness which would be worthless elsewhere blossoms amazingly when there is the flow of water.

The future of Palestine no one can foresee. That any considerable number of Jews will ever return to it is most improbable. The Hebrew does not take kindly to agriculture. His delight is in trade, as a middleman, very seldom as a producer. Money-lenders, also, by instinct, from the wealthy financiers of London to the trembling Jew of Southern Russia, the race everywhere live by their head much more than by their hands. Their advantages among the busy populations of civilised countries are too much to their taste to permit of their ever gathering in any numbers on the stony hills of the Holy Land. Indeed, those in Palestine are, as a rule, quite miserable; drawing their sustenance largely from their brethren elsewhere, though the country virtually lies open to their industry, if they would turn to the plough. The Jew may have a deep traditional love for Jerusalem, but he prefers to edit papers, to fill professorial chairs, to finance, and to trade, where he can thus employ himself, to sweltering for his daily bread on the thirsty uplands of Judæa. Nor is this a modern feature of the Hebrew nationality. For ages before Christ, the Dispersion—that is, the Jews in foreign countries—far outnumbered those in the fatherland; and it is not to be forgotten that when

permission was given to return from Babylon to Judæa, only a very small number were willing to leave the rich plains and commercial advantages of the region of the Euphrates.

The future of the land, it appears to me, belongs to the hardy fellahîn, if ever Divine mercy deliver it from the baleful presence of the Turk, who has been rightly called "the Scourge of God," and bring it under the life-giving protection of some Christian Power.

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